

**Veterinary Nurses Council
Agenda for meeting to be held on Wednesday 6 February 2019 at 10.30am**

1. **Apologies for absence**
2. **Declarations of interest**
3. **Minutes of meeting held on 2 October 2018** Paper attached
4. **Matters arising**
Any matters arising not listed below
5. **Update on operational matters** Oral report
6. **VN Department update** Oral report

Matters for decision by VN Council and reports from Committees

7. **VN Education Committee**
Minutes of meeting held on 10 December 2018 Paper attached
8. **Registration of Veterinary Nurses trained within the EU/EEA** Paper attached
9. **Continuing Professional Development**
 - a. CPD Audit 2018 Paper attached
 - b. CPD Referral Group Paper attached

Matters of note

10. **European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)** Paper attached
11. **Reports from RCVS Committees**
 - a. Practice Standards Group Paper attached
 - b. Standards Committee Oral report
 - c. VN Preliminary Investigation Committee Paper attached

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| 12. | Period of Supervised Practice Exemptions | Oral report |
| 13. | VN Register report
Registrations, removals and student enrolments | Paper attached |
| 14. | VN Futures | Oral report |
| 15. | Communications report | Oral report |
| 16. | Any other business | |
| 17. | Date of next meeting
Wednesday 8 May 2019 at 10.30am | |

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Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	6 February 2019
Title	Minutes of meeting of VN Council held on 2 October 2018
Classification	Unclassified
Summary	Minutes of the meeting of Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC) held on 2 October 2018
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Author	Annette Amato Committee Secretary 0207 202 0713 a.amato@rcvs.org.uk

Veterinary Nurses Council

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2018

Members:	Mrs Belinda Andrews-Jones	
	Mrs Lucy Bellwood	
	Miss Alison Carr	
	Ms Elizabeth Cox	- Vice-Chair
	Mr Dominic Dyer	
	Dr Joanna Dyer	
	Ms Wendy Drinkwater	
	Ms Lucie Goodwin	
	Mrs Susan Howarth	
	* Mrs Andrea Jeffery	
	Mrs Katherine Kissick	
	Miss Racheal Marshall	- Chair
	Professor Susan Proctor	
	Mr Matthew Rendle	- Vice-Chair
In attendance:	Mrs Annette Amato	- Committee Secretary
	Mr Luke Bishop	- Senior Communications Officer
	Mrs Julie Dugmore	- Director of Veterinary Nursing
	Mrs Suzanne Edwards	- Chair, VN Preliminary Investigation Committee
	Ms Eleanor Ferguson	- Registrar
	Mrs Lily Lipman	- Qualifications Manager
	Ms Lizzie Lockett	- Chief Executive
	Ms Corrie McCann	- Director of Operations
	Mr Ben Myring	- Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer

Apologies and welcome

1. The Chair welcomed five new members to Council: Mrs Belinda Andrews-Jones and Mrs Kathy Kissick (veterinary nurse appointed members), Dr Joanna Dyer and Ms Lucie Goodwin (RCVS Council veterinary surgeon appointed members) and Ms Wendy Drinkwater (Lay member). Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Andrea Jeffery.

Declarations of interest

2. The following interests were declared, to be added to the information held on the website:

Mrs Kissick has been appointed as an external examiner for the veterinary nursing degree programmes at Nottingham Trent University and is a consultant for the Awarding Organisation VetSkill; Mrs Bellwood is now a Director of Veterinary Nursing at CVS; Mr Rendle is now head nurse at Independent VetCare Leeds and is also working for the continuing professional development (CPD) provider, Bandaging Angels. The Chair reminded all members to provide any changes to the Committee Secretary so that the website could be kept up to date.

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2018

3. The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2018 were accepted as a correct record.

Matters arising

4. **Period of Supervised Practice (PSP) exemption policy.** Following the agreement of Council at the last meeting to adopt the exemption procedure as a pilot, application forms and further details had been sent recently to two veterinary nurses who had expressed an interest in applying for exemption. No completed applications had yet been received.
5. **Student Handbook.** The development of the Student Handbook had been placed on hold until the revision of the standards had been completed.

Update on operational matters

6. The CEO provided an update on recent operational activities:
7. **Legislative Reform Order (LRO).** Following the successful passing of the LRO through Parliament in May, the new RCVS Council structure had been introduced, with the landmark for the veterinary nursing profession being the inclusion of two veterinary nurses on RCVS Council for the first time. The structure of other Committees reporting to Council has been reviewed, with a new Advancement of the Professions Committee being created to encompass areas such as Mind Matters, Leadership and Innovation, which did not fall within the existing committee structure.
8. **Communications developments.** The Communications team had been very busy over the summer, with RCVS attendance at more public facing events than in the past.
9. **Leadership.** The pilot of the Edward Jenner Veterinary Leadership Programme, run by the RCVS jointly with the NHS, had received very positive feedback, and the full launch of the programme would take place soon. Help was needed in promoting the programme to veterinary nurses.
10. **Graduate Outcomes.** The Graduate Outcomes consultation will be launched at the London Vet Show in November. This will take place over a long period, and will include a roadshow. Veterinary nursing input was to be encouraged.

11. **RCVS Strategic Plan.** The actions set out in the plan were generally being met and on target. The CEO would be happy to provide further information on any aspects. It was also suggested that in future, VN Council should be supplied with the same written update report as RCVS Council.

Veterinary Nursing Department update

12. The Director of Veterinary Nursing reported on several recent changes in the staffing and activities of the VN Department. Initial registration applications from newly qualified nurses are now being processed by the Registration Department using the new online application system. This arrangement is working well and applications are being processed within the specified timeframes. The organisation of the veterinary nurses' admission ceremonies is being dealt with by the Communications Department. The VN Department has a new Enrolments Officer, on an apprenticeship programme, and a new member of staff dealing with centre liaison.
13. Members of VN Council wishing to spend some time in the department to shadow staff members would be very welcome.
14. The next Veterinary Nurses Day would be held at London Zoo on 20 November, and would include the admission of newly registered veterinary nurses, the award of Diplomas in Advanced Veterinary Nursing and the celebration of the commitment to the profession of one retiring veterinary nurse and another who has been registered for over 40 years.

VN Education Committee (VNEC)

15. Mrs Howarth updated Council on meetings of the Education Committee that had taken place since the last Council meeting. A teleconference was held at the end of May to review one item that needed to be addressed before the July meeting. The main meeting of the Committee, planned for July, had to be postponed at very short notice as a quorum could not be achieved, and the items of business which could not be deferred until October were covered in a teleconference on 23 July. The minutes of these meetings (both of which were quorate) would be circulated to Council shortly.
16. The deferred full meeting of the Committee took place on 1 October. The Committee approved a revised template for the Awarding Organisation annual self-assessment report, with minor modifications. This will ensure consistency of information provided to the Education Committee. The development of the Student Handbook and revised risk rules have been put on hold until the standards review has been completed.
17. The Committee noted that the Apprenticeship End Point Assessment (EPA) has now been finalised and published.
18. The Committee approved applications to join the accreditation visitor panel from four RVNs and one student.

19. It was noted that the consultation with the profession on the future framework for post-registration qualifications had received a large number of responses, and the working party was due to meet at the end of the month, to discuss the feedback .
20. The steady increase in Training Practice (TP) numbers was noted.
21. It was also reported that the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) for veterinary nursing will be recoded as a graduate profession, regardless of the route of entry. This will have a positive impact on funding for all VN Higher Education programmes.
22. The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October would be circulated after they had been approved by the Committee. The next meeting of the VNEC would take place in December, and would report to the February meeting of Council.

Continuing Professional Development

23. Council noted the report and initial analysis of the 2018 audit of veterinary nurses' CPD. In response to a query regarding the procedure for dealing with non-compliant VNs and veterinary surgeons, the Registrar confirmed that there is a considerable amount of follow-up and checking carried out in these instances. Ultimately, if the issue is not resolved, each individual case is put to the CPD Working Party and may be referred to the VN Preliminary Investigation Committee, with the last resort being the Disciplinary Committee. It was also confirmed that there had been discussion in the past on whether the annual registration renewal for VNs and veterinary surgeons should not be progressed if the CPD compliance box was not ticked, but this had not been felt to be practicable for a number of reasons.
24. Miss Carr, who sits on the CPD Working Party, reiterated the significant amount of administration that is carried out to ensure that non-compliant members are contacted and advised, and that there is a constant push to raise awareness. It was agreed that awareness raising by as many routes as possible should continue, including articles in the veterinary nursing press as well as the monthly RCVS e-News.
25. Concern was expressed that the overall non-compliance levels are not decreasing year on year, with 25% of the RVNs in the 2018 sample being non-compliant. It was reported that the Working Party had looked into the ease of responding to the audit and completing CPD records, and the conclusion has been that the electronic tool (the Professional Development Record (PDR)) is certainly the way forward. Council was generally in agreement that the ease of compliance should be stressed, and it was also noted that shortening the timescale for following up non-compliance was being considered. Other suggestions were the use of case studies, with posters, and reinforcing to Practice Standards Scheme practices the need for all RVNs and veterinary surgeons to be CPD compliant.
26. A view was expressed that the requirement should be revised to 15 hours per year, rather than the current 45 hours over three years, but it was pointed out that the current requirements are to allow for a flexible workforce. It was also stressed that the RCVS is working to reduce the fear factor and blame culture and that raising awareness, including the

reasons for carrying out CPD, should be stressed in preference to highlighting potential disciplinary measures. This should also be communicated to course providers to ensure awareness for newly qualified VNs, and to maintain their motivation.

27. It was noted that a CPD App was being used for the reflective CPD pilot and that further details would be presented at the next meeting.
28. Further analysis from the 2018 audit, including a breakdown of CPD activities will be presented back to Council at its next meeting.
29. **CPD Working Party.** Miss Carr reported that the Working Party had been working on a decision-making flow chart to ensure consistency of decisions. The group had also discussed closer links with the Practice Standards Scheme and discussion of CPD requirements when on Training Practice visits, in order to be proactive.

Reports from RCVS Committees

Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC)

30. The Chair of the VN PIC presented the report of the Committee, and added that the last two scheduled meetings of the Committee, in July and September, had been cancelled as there were no cases to be considered, reflecting a fall in the number of concerns registered against RVNs in the period 31 January to 12 April 2018. The next scheduled RVN PIC meeting would be on 16 October 2018.
31. In response to queries, it was confirmed that the timeframe for the various stages of dealing with concerns is set out on the RCVS website. The type of concerns raised are mostly arising from personal issues and include criminal convictions such as theft, fraud and abuse of prescription drugs, rather than animal welfare related issues. There had also been one successful use of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) route.
32. The Registrar confirmed that the RCVS advice line will provide guidance for RVNs and veterinary surgeons on the type of criminal convictions and cautions that need to be declared at the point of annual renewal.

Standards Committee

33. Mr Rendle provided a brief update on the meeting of the Standards Committee the previous week. It was noted that the Committee had approved the creation of a sub-group to consider matters arising in relation to Recognised Veterinary Practice (RVP), and the first meeting would be arranged shortly. This news was welcomed by Council members.
34. It was also reported that agreement in principle had been given to the introduction of non-veterinary Certification Support Officers and a press release would provide further details, with matters to be considered further by RCVS Council in November.

VN Disciplinary Committee

35. Council noted the report of the Disciplinary Hearing held on 24 – 27 July 2018, full details of which had been reported on the RCVS website.

VN Futures

36. The Director of Veterinary Nursing provided an update on the activities of the development groups created by the VN Futures Action Group over the past few months.
37. The Sustainable Workforce Group has been working on the production of careers materials, and is looking to pilot an ambassador programme to demonstrate the value of veterinary nursing as a career, through schools and career events. A children's book on the role of a veterinary nurse in practice is also being produced.
38. The Post-registration Group is due to meet on 26 October to discuss the feedback from the consultation, followed by an event on 29 October for those interested in delivering the new framework, with the caveat that the recommendations would need to be considered and approved by the VN Education Committee at its December meeting.
39. The Career Progression and Leadership Group had held two successful events focusing on the role of managing others and flexible working. The Group was now looking to host an event focusing on utilising the skills and potential of nurses as income generators for the practice.
40. The One Health Group is looking to develop a One Health Symposium in 2019, to bring together both veterinary and medical healthcare professionals to help address local One Health issues.
41. It was noted that there was due to be a meeting of the VN Futures Project Board at the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) Congress the following week. An update leaflet on VN Futures would be available at BVNA Congress.

Legislation Working Party

42. The Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer provided an update and background. The Schedule 3 Working Party had been established two years ago at the suggestion of government, to look into additional tasks which could be carried out by veterinary nurses. A detailed survey carried out in 2017 had indicated that there was a great deal of uncertainty amongst veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses as to which tasks can currently be delegated and the veterinary nursing profession is keen to be able to do more in certain areas.
43. In response to the uncertainty around delegation, a number of case studies have been prepared and published on the website, and some more formal guidance will shortly be issued, including a fold-out leaflet for congresses and events. A number of "grey area" case

studies would be prepared by the advice team and these will be circulated to VN Council for comment on content.

44. The survey had indicated that feline castrations and dental extractions were procedures that both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses should be able to carry out, and the risks and benefits would be looked into before taking these ideas further.
45. Another area which the Working Party had been considering was around nurse prescribers, and there has been a call for evidence and ideas. The Legislation Working Party (LWP) was now exploring the options. In response to a query on anaesthesia, it was explained that concrete proposals to allow VNs to assist in anaesthesia had already been agreed by RCVS Council. Subject to review by the LWP they were likely to appear among the LWP's final recommendations.
46. A query was raised on the impact of Brexit on the veterinary nursing profession. It was explained that Brexit risked exacerbating existing workforce shortages in the veterinary profession but the veterinary nursing profession was much less at risk due to not relying on overseas registrations to the same extent.

Communications report

47. The Senior Communications Officer reported on a number of recent and forthcoming activities.
48. **Fellowship Day.** The RCVS Fellowship Day would take place at the Royal Institution on 5 October, with two guest speakers: the UK Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss, and Professor of the Public Understanding of Science, Jim Al-Khalili.
49. **Honours and Awards.** A press release would shortly be issued on the launch of the nomination period for the six RCVS honours and awards for 2019, with the deadline being 18 January 2019. Council members were asked to spread the word and encourage others to nominate, but were reminded that current Council members cannot nominate or be nominated.
50. **Events.** BVNA Congress would take place in Telford from 12 – 14 October. The main focus of the stand would be wellbeing and Mind Matters. A mindfulness activity booklet had been devised for handing to delegates at BVNA Congress, and other materials would include an update leaflet on VN Futures and information on Mind Matters training courses.
51. In November, there would be a CPD Day for overseas qualified veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, to assist with adaptation to working in the UK.
52. **Publications.** The first edition of the online *RCVS News* had been issued in June. The next edition of *VN Education* would be published in early December, with a renewed focus on CPD.

53. **Website.** The website now included a blogs module. Ideas for topics and contributions from VN Council members would be welcomed.

Date of next meeting

54. The dates for the Council meetings in 2019 are:

- Wednesday 6 February
- Wednesday 8 May
- Wednesday 11 September
- Wednesday 13 November.

All meetings will start at 10.30am.

Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	6 February 2018
Title	Veterinary Nurse Education Committee
Classification	Unclassified
Summary	Minutes of the meeting of the VN Education Committee held on 10 December 2018
Decisions required	To approve
Attachments	None
Author	Annette Amato Deputy Head of Veterinary Nursing 0207 202 0713 a.amato@rcvs.org.uk

Veterinary Nurse Education Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2018

Members:	Mrs Donna Cotton	-	Employer representative
	Miss Julia Cox	-	Employer representative
	Mrs Susan Howarth	-	VN Council veterinary nurse (Chair)
	Professor Elizabeth Mossop	-	Independent educationalist
	Mrs Sarah Parkhouse	-	FE veterinary nursing provider
	Mrs Jill Partiss		FE veterinary nursing provider
	* Professor Susan Proctor	-	VN Council lay member
	Mrs Nicola Ruedisueli	-	HE veterinary nursing provider
*absent			
In attendance:	Mrs Annette Amato	-	Committee Secretary
	Mrs Julie Dugmore	-	Director of Veterinary Nursing
	Mrs Victoria Hedges	-	Examinations Manager
	Mrs Lily Lipman	-	Qualifications Manager
	Miss Sian Tanner	-	VN Education Officer

Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Professor Susan Proctor.

Declarations of interest

2. There were no new declarations of interest.

Minutes the meeting of the Education Committee (VNEC) held on 1 October 2018

3. The draft minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee were noted.

Matters arising on the Minutes

4. **Self Assessment Reports (SAR).** The Qualifications Manager confirmed that the final versions of the revised SAR templates had been circulated and approved by the Committee, and would shortly be sent out to all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education (FE) delivery sites (centres) for completion.

Operational update

5.	The Director of Veterinary Nursing updated the Committee on recent developments and activities.
6.	VNEC membership. The previous employer representative on the Committee had recently stepped down; Mrs Cotton and Miss Cox had been appointed to the two employer representative positions and were welcomed to the Committee. The two student representative positions (one FE and one HE) were yet to be filled. It was also noted that student representatives, which could include one year pre-registration and 2 years post-registration, were also required for the visitor panels and the accreditation standards working party.
7.	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). It had been confirmed in October that the RCVS had received recognition from ENQA in respect of its accreditation of veterinary and veterinary nursing education, following the review and visitation by ENQA in April. Some of the ENQA recommendations, which included widening the pool of visitors and more student and peer input, were already being addressed and it is intended to align the processes for veterinary nursing with those for veterinary education where possible.
8.	Standards review. In order to meet the ENQA recommendations, the accreditation standards for veterinary nursing are being reviewed. As ENQA recognition is given in respect of degree programmes, separating the standards into two sets will be considered. A working group appointed by VN Council to discuss the standards for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) would meet in mid-January. The standards for Awarding Organisations (AOs) would be reviewed when the HEI standards had been completed.
9.	VN Department Staff. The Qualifications Manager, Lily Lipman, would be moving to a different role within the RCVS in January, and to tie in with the changes following the ENQA review, the college would be looking to recruit two members of staff, one to co-ordinate HE related accreditation activities, and another to deal with AO accreditation and quality monitoring. The RCVS had also recently appointed a VN project co-ordinator to cover the management of VN Futures and the secretariat of ACOVENE, as well as a broader engagement with stakeholders
10.	Student enrolments. Student enrolments are being processed well within the stated timeframes by the VN enrolments officer and a temporary member of staff, and many colleges have expressed their thanks for the efficiency in dealing with these. It was confirmed that a temporary member of staff could again be appointed in 2019 for the busy three-month period from September to December, if required.
Post-registration qualifications	
11.	Post Registration qualification framework. The Chair reported that a meeting had been held at the end of October to update potential providers on the proposed framework. This meeting had brought up a number of comments and queries which would be addressed at a further meeting of the working group in January. If the details were finalised at this stage,

	these would be put to the VNEC meeting in March for ratification, then to VN Council in May.
12.	DipAVN monitoring. It was confirmed that there had been no monitoring activity of the existing providers since the last meeting of the Committee. An audit was due to be carried out at Harper Adams University in February, and a report would be provided at the next meeting.
Standards for training and education	
13.	Accreditation visitor approval. The Committee discussed the completed person specification with CPD and curriculum vitae for two additional industry expert visitors for accreditation events. One individual was approved for addition to the panel, and further clarification in one area would be requested from the other applicant.
14.	There was a general discussion on the requirements set out in the person specification for industry expert members of VN visitation panels, particularly in respect of the requirement to hold a recognised teaching qualification. It was agreed that this requirement should be moved from 'essential' to 'desirable', and that a an individual should ideally have experience in the relevant sector. If a visitor did not have this experience, the visitor panel should include a member with teaching experience. It was also pointed out that visitor training is provided. For those with no teaching qualification, experience of teaching would be essential.
15.	AO/HEI external examiner update. The Committee noted the current list of external examiners for all accredited qualifications, together with CV and CPD details for those appointed since the previous update.
VN Licence to practise qualifications	
New / provisionally accredited AOs / HEIs	
16.	The Committee noted an update report on provisionally accredited AOs/HEIs, and potential new applications.
Existing providers - AO / HEI monitoring and reaccreditation reports	
17.	Routine monitoring and reaccreditation reports. The Committee noted the summary report, presented by the Qualifications Manager, of the auditing activity undertaken for all established AOs and HEIs since the last meeting.
18.	There was some discussion on the provision of financial reports for audit, and concern that the information provided by in some cases is not particularly meaningful or useful from an accreditation perspective. It was noted that the information required by the committee is in order to demonstrate that a course is financially sustainable, and the Director of Veterinary Nursing pointed out that this would be made clearer in the revised accreditation standards.

19.	Anglia Ruskin University. The Committee noted the accreditation report from June 2018 and the action plan for Anglia Ruskin University, and agreed that the full accreditation status should continue. It was noted that the length of time required to complete the actions would vary according to the specific area.
20.	University of Central Lancashire. The Committee noted the accreditation report from December 2017 and the action plan, which has now been completed. It was agreed that full accreditation status should continue.
21.	Edinburgh Napier University. The report from June 2018 and the action plan were noted. It was agreed that accreditation status should continue.
22.	Middlesex University. It was noted that the accreditation visit took place in November and that the report could not be considered until it had been agreed by the university, and an action plan produced.
Training practice and student numbers	
23.	The Committee noted a paper showing the number of approved training practices (TPs) offering clinical training and work experience to student veterinary nurses, including the number of new approvals and removals for the previous twelve months. It was confirmed that it was not possible to show a split between TPs taking in FE and HE students, as some TPs take students from both sectors.
24.	The Director of Veterinary Nursing added that some TP information had been requested in a survey of colleges, which had been put on hold due to staff changes within the department. It was suggested that it would be useful to gather information on apprenticeship numbers in any future survey.
Items for publication	
25.	The Committee thanked Lily Lipman for all her work as Qualifications Manager and wished her success in her new role as Senior Manager for the Practice Standards Scheme. A piece was due to be included in December issue of <i>VN Education</i> .
Meeting dates for 2019	
26.	The meeting dates for 2019 were noted as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 27 March • Wednesday 24 July • Monday 14 October
Any other business	

27.	A query was raised regarding the guidance given on student recruitment and fitness to practise. It was noted the universities would have their own guidance and policies. It would normally be the case that a prospective student would not be accepted on to a degree course if they could not pass this with reasonable adjustments.
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Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	6 February 2019
Title	Proposed changes to registration of veterinary nurses educated within the EU/EEA
Classification	Unclassified
Summary	<p>When the UK exits the EU, legislation relating to the registration of veterinary nurses educated within the EU/EEA is likely to change. The draft amended Statutory Instrument indicates that regulatory bodies will no longer need to accept applications from individuals whose qualification does not meet the minimum content, scope and level required of professionals educated in the UK.</p> <p>This provides an opportunity to reconsider our current processes.</p> <p>This paper provides a summary of the current process and suggests changes to be considered by VNC.</p>
Decisions required	<p>By the Veterinary Nurses Council:</p> <p>To consider aligning the application process for individuals educated within the EU/EEA with the one currently in place for individuals educated outside the EU/EEA.</p>
Attachments	None
Author	<p>Victoria Hedges Examinations Manager Veterinary Nursing Department 020 7202 0782 v.hedges@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Proposed changes to registration of veterinary nurses trained within the EU/EEA

Introduction

1. At the time of writing, it remains very unclear what relationship the United Kingdom will have with the European Union after Brexit, including matters related to the veterinary professions. It remains possible that the UK will fail to reach an agreement with the EU. In preparation for this 'no deal' situation measures have been taken by the government to amend the EU Directive 2015/2059/EU. This directive sets out the general system for the recognition of evidence of training/education which the RCVS must consider when processing applications from an EU citizen educated within the EU/EEA. This proposed amendment will give the RCVS more flexibility in creating new arrangements for the registration of EU-qualified veterinary nurses. This will come into effect from 29 March 2019, unless a UK-EU withdrawal deal is agreed before that date, in which case the status quo will continue for a further 20 months.
2. VN Council have previously agreed the criteria and processes by which an individual educated as a veterinary nurse outside the UK can apply to enter the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses. There are different processes in place for individuals educated within the EU/EEA and those educated outside of it.
3. This paper seeks approval from VN Council to agree the proposal to apply the same application processes regardless of nationality or country of qualification.

Current position

4. The current EU directive indicates that where someone is seeking to work in a regulated profession, such as veterinary nursing, they must register with the relevant competent authority (in this case the RCVS). The competent authority must check whether the individual is eligible for recognition. This includes checking the level, content and scope of the qualification. If there is a difference between the education completed and the minimum requirements necessary to register then the RCVS may impose compensation measures, i.e. an adaptation period of up to three years or an aptitude test. The applicant may in principle choose between the adaptation period or the aptitude test.
5. The process differs significantly for individuals educated outside the EU/EEA. The RCVS makes no allowances where an individual's qualification is significantly lacking in areas which are felt to be essential. Applications are only considered for registration if the individual's qualification is deemed to be of the same level, scope and has similar content. These applicants are all required to pass the RCVS VN Pre-registration examination and are permitted to undertake an optional Period of Supervised Adaptation (PSA) (work experience in a UK practice) to assist them to prepare for the examination.

6. The only exception to the rules outlined in paragraph 4 and 5 is that RCVS normally accepts holders of ACOVENE (the European Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education) accredited qualifications for entry onto the register without further assessment.
7. All applicants with the exception of holders of ACOVENE-accredited qualifications are required to provide evidence of the level and content of the qualification they hold, as well as the length of clinical experience they have. This information is considered against RCVS requirements for UK-educated veterinary nurses. As a minimum, the applicant's education should have covered similar areas to that outlined in the RCVS Day One Skills (DOS) for Veterinary Nurses and RCVS Day One Competences (DOC) for Veterinary Nurses. The minimum level of education must be at Qualifications Curriculum Framework (QCF) level 3, which is equivalent to European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 4. They must also have completed at least 1,800 hours of clinical experience during the completion of or after completion of the qualification.
8. Typical outcomes of applications from within and outside the EU/EEA are detailed in table 1.

Table 1 – Typical outcomes of applications from individuals educated within and outside of the EU/EEA

	EU/EEA applicant	Non EU/EEA applicant
Qualification is not a veterinary nursing qualification	Rejected	Rejected
Veterinary nursing qualification level is below QCF level 3	Rejected	Rejected
Qualification is a veterinary nursing qualification and aligns well with the RCVS DOS and DOC. Applicant has <u>at least</u> 1,800 hours of clinical experience and recent experience (within the previous 5 years) working as a veterinary nurse.	Accepted without adaptation	Accepted on completion of the VN Pre-registration examination optional PSA.
Qualification is a veterinary nursing qualification and aligns well with the RCVS DOS and DOC. Applicant has <u>under</u> 1,800 hours of clinical experience or has not worked a veterinary nurse within the previous 5 years.	Accepted with compulsory PSA to increase / update clinical experience as necessary. The applicant may choose to increase their hours before they take up a position in the UK	Accepted on completion of the VN Pre-registration examination and compulsory PSA to increase / update clinical experience as necessary. The applicant may choose to increase their hours before they take up a position in the UK
Qualification is a veterinary nursing qualification but content differs significantly in some essential areas.	Accepted with adaptation. Applicants are provided with two options. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete a compulsory PSA while they are assessed against the relevant parts of the Nursing Progress log (NPL) 2. Pass the RCVS Pre-registration examination. <p><i>Note: if clinical experience is less than 1,800 hours then compulsory PSA will be required.</i></p>	Rejected

Discussion/ issues

9. With the imminent departure of the UK from the EU a new Statutory Instrument, The *Recognition of professional Qualifications (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018* has been drafted by the government. It is expected that this will come into effect on exit day, which at the time of writing could be as soon as 29 March 2019.
10. The draft regulation continues to expect the RCVS to recognise individuals with a veterinary nursing qualification of an equivalent standard (content, scope and level) to the UK qualification.
11. The obligation to provide compensation measures such as examinations or adaptation periods where there are deficiencies with the content of the qualification will no longer apply. The RCVS will however, be free to choose to continue to apply compensation measures if they wish.
12. These changes provide an opportunity for VN Council to reconsider the current processes. It is proposed that if / when the draft Statutory Instrument comes into force all applications regardless of country of education (with the exception of holders of ACOVENE accredited qualifications) should be considered using the processes currently in place for individuals educated outside the EU/EEA. Council have agreed a similar process for veterinary surgeons educated in the EU with the exception of schools accredited by EAEVE.
13. In the case of the veterinary nurse register, this would mean that anyone whose qualification is significantly deficient in content and scope would be rejected. All other applicants will be required to pass the RCVS Pre-registration examination. An optional PSA will continue to be available to assist an applicant to prepare for the examination. Where the applicant's length of clinical experience is below that expected of veterinary nurses educated in the UK then a compulsory PSA will need to be completed.
14. Table 2 provides details of the number of applicants educated in the EU/EEA who received a decision on their application in 2017/2018. The majority of applications were received from individuals holding an ACOVENE accredited qualification. Of the remaining applications, nine were deemed to be suitably qualified and were able to apply to register without further assessment. Under the new proposals these applicants would be required to pass the RCVS VN Pre-registration examination.
15. In the same period, nineteen applicants were deemed to have a qualification deficient in one or more areas. These applicants were given a choice between completing a PSA and the relevant parts of the NPL or pass the RCVS Pre-registration examination. The majority chose to complete the PSA/NPL.

16. It is highly likely that some of the applicants' deficiencies may not have been significant to the point that animal welfare would have been compromised. It is therefore likely that under the proposed system some of these applicants will be permitted to proceed to the RCVS Pre-registration examination. There are however a few that would be unlikely to proceed further.

Outcome of application from EU/EEA	2017	2018
ACOVENE accredited qualification (direct to register)	38	27
Direct to register. Qualification meets the minimum content, scope and level required by RCVS	5	4
Adaptation / Examination because qualification is deficient in content or scope	15	4
Rejected - qualification is not a veterinary nursing qualification	0	2

17. If VN Council accept, the proposals outlined above then they are requested to also consider the allowance of a transition period if exit day is as soon as 29 March 2019. It is possible that potential applicants will be in the process of gathering evidence to support their application. It is proposed that the Director of Veterinary Nursing and Examinations Manager use their discretion when considering the applications to ensure anyone in the process of applying and currently gathering evidence may have their application considered under the current procedures. Every effort will be made to contact any potential applicants to warn them of the changes.

Discussion/ issues

18. Council is asked to confirm that it is content with the above proposal outlined above. This would be subject to whether or not a deal is made between the UK government and EU and the content of any such deal.

Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	6 February 2019
Title	2018 Monitoring of Registered Veterinary Nurses' CPD
Classification	Unclassified
Summary	This paper provides the analysis of the 2018 audit of CPD records of veterinary nurses.
Decisions required	Agree the suggestions for the 2019 CPD audit
Attachments	Annex 1
Author	Jenny Soreskog-Turp Senior Education Officer 0207 202 0701 j.soreskog-turp@rcvs.org.uk

Background

1. In October 2018, VN Council received a paper about the initial findings of the 2018 CPD audit of Veterinary Nurses. This paper contains the full analysis of records and raises some of the issues that have been identified through the audit process.

Outcomes of the audit

2. Responses were received from 939 veterinary nurses (93%):
 - a. 672 RVNs whose records show that they are compliant with the CPD requirement of 45 hours over three years (72 % of respondents).
 - b. 267 RVNs whose records show that they are not currently compliant with the CPD requirement (28%), compared to 32% of Veterinary surgeons in last year's audit.
3. 77 RVNs have not responded to either the initial letter requesting their records or to the subsequent reminders.
4. Annex 1 provides a further analysis of the audit results.

Non-compliance

5. 267 RVNs were not compliant with CPD requirement of 45 hours over 3 years. 58% did not give any reason for being non-compliant. The main reasons for non-compliance were:
 - a. Maternity leave (28%) (38 % in the 2017 audit)
 - b. Family Commitments (12%)
 - c. Time/opportunity (11%)
 - d. Removed name from register (11%)
 - e. Illness (6%)
 - f. Lost records/Not recorded (4%)
 - g. Other (3%)
6. Any RVN that did not reach the CPD requirement will be included in this year's audit. A number of RVNs have been included in several audits but are still non-compliant. 68% of the non-compliant RVNs have only been included in one audit, 23% in two audits, 3% in three, 3% in four, 1% in 5 and 6 audits and 2 % of the RVNs in this group has been included in seven audits and are still non-compliant.
7. RVNs that were non-compliant, recorded an average of 27 hours over the three years. The average hours of CPD for nurses included in their first audit was 19 hours compared to 25 hours for RVNs that had been included in seven audits.

Non Respondents

8. 77 (7%) RVNs did not respond to any communication from the RCVS regarding their CPD, which is similar to the last couple of years when 8 and 6% did not respond.
9. The breakdown by age or years on the register show that almost 43 % of non-responders are between 35 and 45 and 38% have been on the register 12-19 years.

Analysis of CPD records

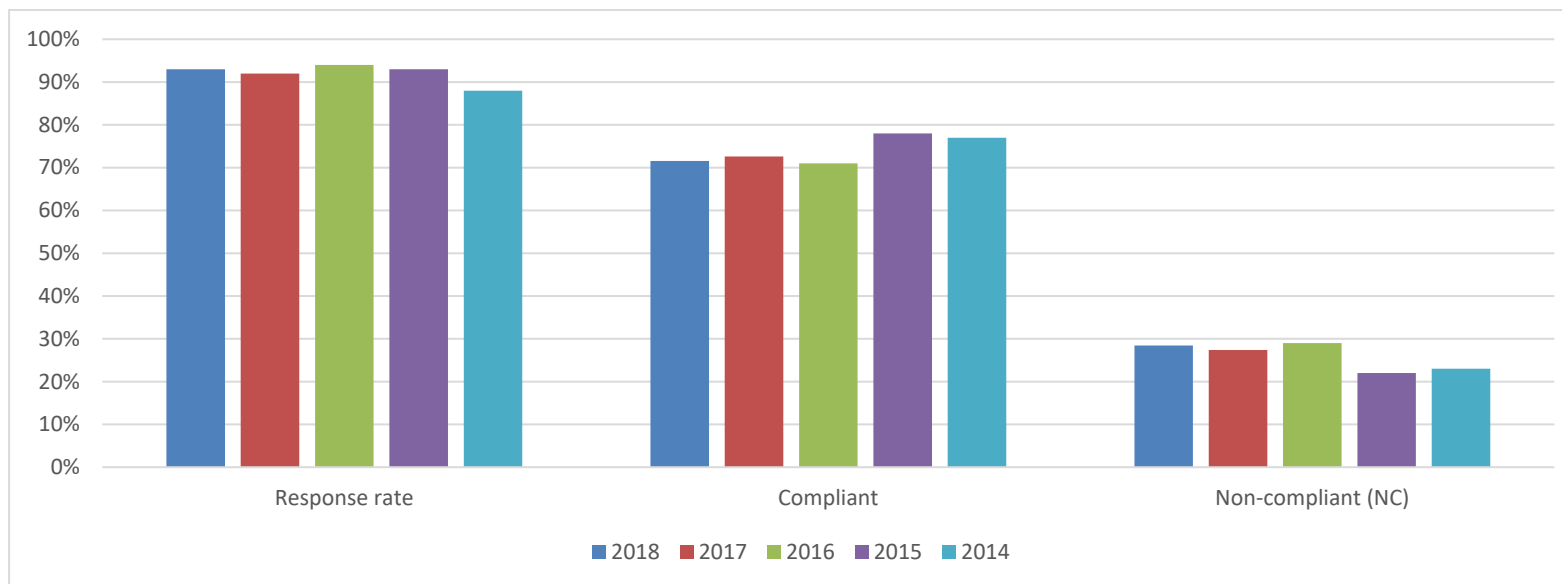
10. The median number of CPD hours across all groups was 47. The mean number of hours was 75. The range of hours was 0-3998. Whilst 3998 was the maximum number of hours recorded in the 3-year period covered by the audit, there were seven records that showed more than 1000 hours of CPD.
11. The breakdown of CPD hours by age groups shows that compliance is higher for the youngest group (81%), and the 48-52 year olds with 74% compliance. Non-compliance is highest amongst 58-64 year olds (57%), while most other age groups have a non-compliance between 35-38%.
12. The breakdown of CPD hours by the number of years on the register show that compliance is highest in the group that have been 3-6 years on the register (73%). For all other groups compliance is between 53-64%.
13. 76 % of respondents used the PDR to record their CPD which is lower than in the 2017 audit when 85% used the PDR.

Next steps

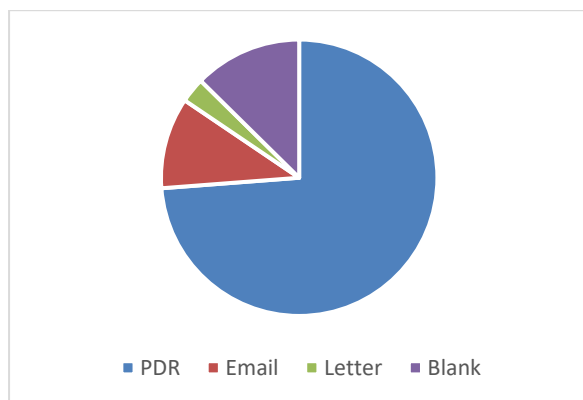
14. It is suggested that the next audit of CPD records will take place in June 2019 and include:
 - a. A random sample of 10% of RVNs on the register
 - b. RVNs who submitted a return in 2018 but fell some hours short of the overall requirement.
 - c. RVNs who, despite reminders, failed to respond to requests to submit their CPD records in 2018, and yet remain active on the Register of Veterinary Nurses.
 - d. RVNs who confirmed that they were not compliant with the CPD Requirement at the annual renewal.

Annex 1

	Included in sample	Responded		Compliant		Non-compliant (NC)	
Total 2018	1016	939	93%	672	72%	267	28%
Total 2017	857	792	92%	575	73%	217	27%
Total 2016	627	591	94%	420	71%	171	29%
Total 2015	798	739	93%	574	78%	165	22%
Total 2014	814	718	88%	556	77%	162	23%



Records received		
PDR	598	76%
Email	66	11%
Letter	26	3%
Blank	102	13%



Reasons for non-compliance

Maternity leave	53	28%
No reason	47	25%
Family Commitments	23	12%
No time/opportunity	20	11%
Removed register	20	11%
Illness	11	6%
Lost/No records	8	4%
Career break	3	2%
Other	4	2%

CPD Hours over the three years						
	All	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
0-9	47	12	11	3	13	8
10-19	36	10	7	5	14	0
20-29	61	13	19	3	25	1
30-39	109	22	31	8	48	0
40-44	73	22	18	1	32	0
45-55	243	162	44	9	27	1
56-100	248	225	5	3	14	1
100+	120	111	3	3	2	1

Range: 0-3998.3, Avg: 81

Average number of CPD Hours over 3 years	
All	81
Compliant	109
Non-Compliant	27
Group 1	106
Group 2	39
Group 3	77
Group 4	36
Group 5	31

CPD Breakdown by years on the register

	Total	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-44	45-54	55-99	100+	N-C	C
03-06	283	7	7	18	24	19	72	92	44	75	208
	30%	2%	2%	6%	8%	7%	25%	33%	16%	27%	73%
07-12	253	11	20	18	31	12	74	53	34	92	161
	27%	4%	8%	7%	12%	5%	29%	21%	13%	36%	64%
13-19	205	7	5	10	33	27	39	65	19	82	123
	22%	3%	2%	5%	16%	13%	19%	32%	9%	40%	60%
20-30	159	19	4	11	17	12	32	42	22	63	96
	17%	12%	3%	7%	11%	8%	20%	26%	14%	40%	60%
31-48	39	3	1	4	4	4	7	14	2	16	23
	4%	8%	3%	10%	10%	10%	18%	36%	5%	41%	59%

CPD Breakdown by age

	Total	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-44	45-54	55-99	100+	N-C	C
23-27	80	0	1	2	7	5	16	36	13	15	65
		0%	1%	3%	9%	6%	20%	45%	16%	19%	81%
28-32	201	8	11	19	20	12	54	46	31	70	131
		4%	5%	9%	10%	6%	27%	23%	15%	35%	65%
33-37	234	10	8	12	36	18	59	61	30	84	150
		4%	3%	5%	15%	8%	25%	26%	13%	36%	64%
38-42	171	8	10	11	21	17	40	45	19	67	104
		5%	6%	6%	12%	10%	23%	26%	11%	39%	61%
43-47	114	11	3	7	11	11	25	32	14	43	71
		10%	3%	6%	10%	10%	22%	28%	12%	38%	62%
48-52	73	2	1	4	10	2	20	24	10	19	54
		3%	1%	5%	14%	3%	27%	33%	14%	26%	74%
53-57	40	3	2	2	2	6	7	17	1	15	25
		8%	5%	5%	5%	15%	18%	43%	3%	38%	63%
58-64	23	3	2	4	2	2	3	5	2	13	10
		13%	9%	17%	9%	9%	13%	22%	9%	57%	43%

Non-compliance

Number of times being audits	Number of Audits
1 audit	233
2 audit	77
3 audit	11
4 audit	9
5 audit	2
6 Audits	2
7 Audits	8

Non-compliant RVNS - number of audits

	Initial	2nd audit	3rd audit	4 audits	5 audits	6 audits	7 audits
2018	68%	23%	3%	3%	1%	1%	2%
2017	23%	54%	11%	6%	1%	1%	5%
2016	67%	20%	8%	2%	3%		
2015	53%	18%	9%	20%			
2014	46%	16%	37%				

Average number of CPD hours for Non-compliant RVNs

	Initial	2nd audit	3rd audit	4 audits	5 audits	6 audits	7 audits
2018	19	20	22	27	34	19	25
2017	27	18	22	27	34	15	18
2016	24	26	31	24	25		
2015	26	25	21	22			
2014	26	28	25				

Non Responders										
	2018		2017		2016			2015		2014
Age										
27-34	15	19%	24	37%	16	44%	25	53%	52	56%
35-45	33	43%	30	46%	16	44%	17	36%	30	32%
46-73	29	38%	11	17%	4	11%	5	11%	11	12%
Years on register										
4-7	10	13%	13	20%	10	28%	14	30%	43	46%
8-11	15	19%	22	34%	12	33%	19	40%	27	29%
12-19	29	38%	21	32%	11	31%	10	21%	18	19%
20+	23	30%	9	14%	3	8%	4	9%	5	5%

Meeting	VN Council
Date	6 February 2019
Title	Update from CPD Referral Group
Classification	Unclassified
Summary	Minutes from the CPD Referral Group's meeting on the 16 January 2019
Decisions required	None: to note
Attachments	Annex A: Updated minutes from CPD Referral group's meeting on the 7 th September 2018.
Author	Jenny Soreskog-Turp Senior Education Officer 0207 202 0701 j.soreskog-turp@rcvs.org.uk

CPD Referral Group

Notes of the meeting held on 16 January 2019

Present:	Elaine Acaster	Chair
	Alison Carr	
	Susan Paterson	
	Belinda Andrews-Jones	
* Absent	Michael Hepper	
In attendance:	Jenny Soreskog-Turp	Senior Education Officer
	Julie Dugmore	Director of Veterinary Nursing
	Linda Prescott-Clements	Director of Education

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair welcomed Belinda Andrews-Jones as a new member of the group and noted that Michael Hepper had sent his apologies.

Declarations of interest

2. Ms Andrews-Jones declared that one of the referred veterinary surgeons was a locum in her veterinary group.

Minutes

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 7th September 2018 were received and the group made several amendments to them. The updated minutes are attached as Annex A.

Matters arising

4. The group was updated about the statistics from the CPD blog as discussed at the previous meeting. The last blog post was written in April 2018 so the group suggested that we should find volunteers to write new posts about the impact of CPD. It would be helpful if the posts could include common issues seen in referred cases such as only working in a specific area like TB testing, or CPD while on maternity leave. **Action: Ms Andrews-Jones will send names of VNs that might be interested in writing new blog or social media posts for the RCVS.**

5. The Chair suggested it would be valuable to discuss evaluation of data and procedures and the effects of the referral process since the inception of the group. The group agreed that it would be useful to look into historic data for referred cases to identify any trends and evaluate the procedures and effects of the referral process. **Action: JST will produce a report for May's meeting that will then presented to EC/VNC in September.**

Update from the CPD Policy Working Party

6. The group received an update from the CPD Working Party. The CPD Pilot finished in October 2018 and the Working Party has recommended changes to the CPD requirement including the IT system. The group thought that the changes were positive and would like to see an app to aid recording of CPD on the go. The group have noticed that many vets/nurses do not update their records on a regular basis so suggested that a new system should include reminders to encourage regular updates. The recommendations from the Policy Working Party will be discussed at Education Committee and VN Council in February.

Draft Flow chart

7. The flowchart had been updated with the changes suggested from the last meeting. The group felt that the flowchart was still not clear enough and agreed that it would be better to develop three different versions:
 - Internal process chart for the group to ensure consistency in decision making
 - Diagram process chart with a timeline and key steps
 - A process chart that can be sent to individuals so that they understand the process and next steps.
8. The group suggested that Dr Prescott-Clements, as the new Director of Education, should review the draft charts to check that the steps and procedures are clear. **Action: Draft flowcharts will be reviewed by LP-C and then sent to members of the group before the next meeting.**
9. Once the content of the charts have been agreed it was suggested that we ask the Communication Department to help us with the design and visual aspects.

New Referrals

10. The deadline for the VS CPD audit had to be extended due to a low response rate therefore any new referrals have not been contacted yet. 28 veterinary surgeons have failed to respond to three audit requests so they will be contacted in January to ask for their records/plan. The group will be updated on their progress in May.

Follow up on non-respondent veterinary surgeons/nurses

11. The group received a paper that provided an update about the non-respondent VS/VNs.
12. 18 veterinary surgeons/nurses were non-compliant (N-C) at the last meeting in September and were asked to send their updated records/plans The group discussed the cases and decided on the following actions:

- 1 RVN that was referred in 2015 had updated her records but not yet sent a plan. The group felt that since she had been N-C for so long the nurse might need a phone call to discuss CPD opportunities. Her progress will be monitored in May 2019. **Post meeting note:** The RVN has been in contact and had some further CPD to add to her record so is now CPD compliant and we have got a plan for how she will make sure that she stays up to date.
 - 5 vets have sent in their records and are now CPD compliant.
 - 2 vets and 1 RVN has sent in their records but no development plan. The group agreed that the development plan should be chased up and they should send updated records by May 2019.
 - 7 vets have not responded or updated their records so the group agreed that they should be sent a letter by recorded delivery from the registrar asking them for records by the 31st January 2019. If no reply is received they should be referred to Prof Con.
13. The information agreed above will be collated and presented to group prior to its next meeting to enable the group to make a decision on any further action.
14. The group noted that there were some significant gaps in contact with some of the individuals and received assurances that cases would be followed up more closely in future. The detailed case information were also missing complete dates which made it difficult to follow the audit trail.
Action: JST to review documents and procedures to make sure that the agreed process is followed and the group receives information with complete dates.
15. The group was concerned that some veterinary surgeons/nurses have been monitored for a long time but were still non-compliant. It was suggested that we should try to link N-C vets/nurses from the referral group with the PSS inspections. The group queried if we could mention in our correspondence that since they work for PSS accredited practice it is a requirement of the scheme for all vets/nurses to be CPD compliant. **Action: JST to discuss potential GDPR issues with the Registrar.**
16. The group also suggested that non-compliant vets/nurses should be offered a mentor to help and encourage them to find suitable CPD. **Action: Education/VN Department to explore this option further.**

Any other business

17. There was no other business

Date of next meeting

The dates of the next meetings are on the 16th May at 12.30 and the 2nd October at 12.30.

Jenny Soreskog-Turp

January 2019

j.soreskog-turp@rcvs.org.uk

Annex A**CPD Referral Group
Notes of the meeting held on 7 September 2018****Present:**

Elaine Acaster (Chair) (EA)
Naila Hassanali (NH)
Julie Dugmore (JD)
Mike Hepper (MH)
Alison Carr (AC)
Susan Paterson (SP)
Samantha Eady (SE)
Jenny Soreskog-Turp (JS-P)

Dialled in

Linda Prescott-Clements (LP-C)

Apologies

Sandra Neary (SN)
Christine Warman (CW)

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting giving apologies for those unable to attend including welcoming Linda – Prescott Clements the new Head of Education who will be taking over from Christine Warman

Declarations of Interest

2. There was no declaration or conflict of interest expressed by member

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

3. The group agreed the recording of the minutes as an accurate record. An update on all actions from the previous meeting were given. Below are updates on outstanding actions which will need to come back to the next group.
 - a) Julie Dugmore updated the group in regards to practice visits and reinforcing CPD. Following the last referral group meeting a meeting took place with Lisa Grennell who is the Senior Manager, Practice Standards Scheme, CPD has been incorporated into visits to practices.

Chris Warman was not able to attend a Major Employers Group (MEG) meeting to promote CPD due to adverse weather conditions. An email update was therefore sent instead. This action will need to be carried forward by Linda Prescott-Clements the new Director of Education with support from Julie Dugmore.

- b) Further to Julie Dugmore's update regarding practice visits, members of the group would like to see a communications piece to promote CPD. The CPD policy should also be updated to reflect the agreed action of mandatory use of the PDR for non-compliant vets identified in audits and from this group

Action 1: Jenny Soreskog-Turp to carry forward an action to speak to Jeff Little to discuss how best to promote CPD through our colleges communication channels

Action 2: Jenny Soreskog-Turp to look into updating the current CPD policy to reflect mandatory use of the PDR if they are not already doing so and are identified as non-compliant as agreed by education committee. Consideration will be given to individuals who can demonstrate significant mitigating circumstances.

CPD Referral Group Process flow chart

4. The referral group had a lengthy discussion in regards to the new flow chart. Comments and suggested addition information has been noted down to include but not limited to;
 - Opening notes at the top of the process chart to be rewritten with mention “compliance with the RCVS as a regulator” as to ensure clarity.
 - A timeline of committee and council dates needs to run alongside the process chart to allow reporting into committees of cases going through the referral group process to being compliant or being passed up to preliminary investigation committee or disciplinary.
 - The group were informed by Julie Dugmore that as of 2019, education committee will increase its meeting frequencies to four times a year.
 - The group asked for boxes four and five to be combined and clearer wording for clarity of this step.
 - At the very end of the process chart once a case has been closed by professional conduct an additional box to be included to ensure this comes back to the referral group as share investigation outcomes with the group.
 - Timeline for monitoring cases to match when referral groups take place

Action 3: To update the Referral Group Process Flow Chart with all suggested changes and recirculate before the next meeting for further comments

Champions Blog Site Visit Figures

5. Alex Gulati provided figures as to how many times the site had been accessed and Naila Hassanali provided a more up to date figure to show a comparison of more recent figures. At a first glance this looks positive and the group would like for someone to attend a future meeting to discuss this more at length and to be able to understand if there is further work which can be done by the education department to promote CPD given the new changes which may be taking place in 2019.
6. Education committee agreed at the May meeting that PDR should be mandatory for all professionals found to be non-compliant with leniency given to those who are unable to access or use a computer for a valid reason. Susan Paterson asked if this and the CPD Policy on the RCVS site has been updated. Naila Hassanali informed the group that action is outstanding and that both would be looked into and reported back to the group in January.

Action 4: Alex Gulati to be invited to a future meetings to talk the group through visits to the champion’s blog to answer further questions from the group and improvements which can be made.

Action 5: A communication piece regarding the education committee’s decision to be written to make professionals aware of mandatory PDR mandatory use for those currently identified as being non-compliant through audits.

Action: This action has been covered by **Action 2** of these minutes

Professional Conduct Update on Cases

7. Mike Hepper recapped on cases which had been referred to Prof Con. As long as they do start to respond and engage with the college and actively either try to make up their CPD to be compliant or have hours to report the cases are closed and referred back to the education department for monitoring. Mike Hepper informed the group that for cases taken to DC there needs to be sufficient evidence, paper work and phone log paper records of all interactions with a professional for a strong case to take someone to DC.
8. The process flow chart which is being finalised will help those identified go through a more stringent rigorous process before being referred to PIC. Those identified through the audit process must be contacted regularly throughout the year and these interactions be recorded. Contact by the RCVS once a year is insufficient to demonstrate a professional is serially non-compliant.

Follow up on non-respondent veterinary surgeons 2017

9. The group reviewed the six cases known to the group since 2018. Four cases have now been closed with advice given on appropriate CPD and the importance of recording going forward. Two remain open. One case (returner from health protocol) will continue to be followed up for CPD compliance at the next meeting.

Follow up on non-respondent Vet Surgeons and Vet Nurses 2017

10. The group reviewed fifteen cases of new VS and VNs who had not responded to three audit requests in last year's audit or have been identified through a query run on iMIS,

To Summaries:

- a) Of the fifteen cases eight have been closed
- b) Three cases currently sit with Mike Hepper and team
- c) Two will need to be monitored by this group and reviewed in January
- d) One has signed for his letter and education officer awaits a response from this Vet
- e) One RVN has removed themselves from the register.

Follow up on non-respondent veterinary surgeons 2016

11. The group reviewed all surgeons case by case, known to the group since 2018. The group recommended of the fourteen cases presented, three cases are to remain open with a request for further information on their CPD activity before being closed in January.

To Summaries:

- a) The group were satisfied with the CPD of eleven Vet Surgeons with one of which will be included in a future audit. A follow up email reminder about the importance of CPD, submission in appropriate formats and responding to future communication with the RCVS to be sent to all those whose cases have been closed.

- b) One vet will need to be contacted to encourage him to engage with his regulator and to supply his CPD record. He has previously been referred to PIC but due to missing files the process will need to start again. Naila Hassanali will leave this to Jenny Soreskog-Turp as to not confuse this process.

Any other business

- 12. Susan Paterson pointed out to the group that percentages of Vet Surgeons and Vet Nurses reviewed by the group and number of cases closed as a result of being compliant once again should be fed into committees. This will allow education committee to be informed of the groups remit and progress informing decisions by the college by providing a whole rounded reporting approach of CPD compliance.

Action 6: Jenny Soreskog-Turp once back in post to see if figures can be pulled, agreed by the group and presented in the New Year.

- 13. It was also discussed that it would be helpful if an agenda item could be added to PIC meetings to clearly demonstrate the link between the referral group and how referred cases are handled.

Action 7: Jenny Soreskog-Turp once back in post to talk to Mike Hepper, Britta Crawford and Annette Amato to see if this is a possibility and carry forward this action in relation to getting an agenda item to explain to committees how the referral group and cases which are referred are handled with in the college

- 14. The group asked if papers presented at future meeting could be labelled to reflect the agenda item number being discussed as to make it easier for the group to follow papers

Action 8: Jenny Soreskog-Turp once back to include corresponding agenda items on additional papers to allow the group to follow papers relating to cases easier to follow

Date of next meeting TBC

Naila Hassanali has been covering Jenny Soreskog-Turp post while she has been on maternity leave. This will be coming to an end with Jenny Soreskog-Turp to be back in post from November and will send out the doodle poll for the next meeting.

Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	6 February 2019
Title	ENQA Update
Classification	Unclassified
Summary	<p>At its October board meeting, ENQA took the decision to accredit RCVS following a successful review of its accreditation processes.</p> <p>The report produced by ENQA following the visit highlighted some key strengths of the College and its accreditation and quality assurance processes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dedicated and experienced staff and RCVS Council and committee members; • a dedication to learning and improvement throughout the organisation with great awareness of the importance of quality assurance; • a sound and robust methodology for training the best graduates through its Day One Competences; and, • excellent relationships with key stakeholders and active communication of its activities and achievements. <p>The report also pointed out some of the areas where the RCVS could improve, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the development of a comprehensive quality assurance policy which would help external stakeholders understand the scope of its quality assurance activities as well as its processes and aims; • consideration of further alignment between the accreditation processes for veterinary and veterinary nursing degrees to achieve greater consistency; • adopting a greater and more diverse pool of accreditors, particularly for veterinary nursing degrees; and, • improving the internal quality assurance including scrutiny of decision making processes by the Audit & Risk Committee. <p>Work has already begun to address some of these deficiencies and RCVS will receive a follow-up visitation in 2020 to look at our progress with these actions.</p>
Decisions required	None, to note.
Attachments	ENQA accreditation letter ENQA visitation report
Author	Jordan Nicholls Senior Education Officer j.nicholls@rcvs.org.uk

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Christopher Tufnell
President
Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P2AF
United Kingdom

Bern, 26 October 2018

Subject: Membership of RCVS in ENQA

Dear Mr. Tufnell,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 17 October 2018, the Board of ENQA took the decision that RCVS is in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and thus fulfils the membership criteria according to article 6, paragraph 1 of ENQA's rules of procedure.

The Board would like to use this opportunity to provide an articulation regarding standard 2.5 Criteria for outcomes, where its opinion differs from that of the panel. The Board notes that there is sufficient evidence that criteria for outcomes are based on explicit and published criteria and applied consistently and fairly. Therefore, in the opinion of the Board, the standard 2.5 can be considered as substantially compliant.

Furthermore, the Board emphasises the need for the agency to give more attention to ESG standard 3.4 Thematic analysis, where the Board expect RCVS to follow the recommendations of the panel and develop a clear concept and plan for analysing and publishing general findings of RCVS' external quality assurance activities.

The Board would like to receive a follow-up report containing RCVS's reactions to all recommendations within two years of its decision, i.e. by October 2020.

The Board also encourages RCVS to take advantage of the voluntary progress visit – a new enhancement-led feature in the review process. The visit would take place in about two years' time from this decision. The ENQA Secretariat will be in touch with you in about a year's time to discuss this possibility. The costs of this visit have already been included as part of the review fee and are non-refundable except for the travel costs of the experts. More information about the progress visit can be found in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat.

Please accept my congratulations to RCVS for the positive review outcome and I look forward to fruitful future cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Christoph Grolimund
President

Annex: Areas for development

Annex: Areas for development

As outlined by the review panel, RCVS is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

RCVS is recommended to add a more comprehensive QA policy to the next strategic plan or develop a separate QA policy document that would help stakeholders outside the RCVS to understand the aim and scope of the agency's QA activities. Additionally, the agency is recommended to engage students from both veterinary surgeons and nurses programmes to the decision-making bodies of the RCVS.

ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis

RCVS is recommended to develop a clear concept and plan for thematic analysis. Next, the agency is recommended to set clear roles and responsibilities among staff members for analysing and publishing general findings of RCVS' external quality assurance activities.

ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

RCVS is recommended to apply a systematic approach for collecting feedback and align the procedures at accreditations of VS and VN degrees whenever possible.

ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

RCVS is recommended to develop VN accreditation methodology closer to the one of VS, and through this increase the focus of IQA in VN reviews, with special attention to student-centred learning, also in VN reviews.

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts

At VN accreditation, the agency is recommended to pursue the widening of review pools and avoid relying too heavily on the senior staff of RCVS.

ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

Accreditation decisions should be confinable and justifiable. Therefore, RCVS is recommended to consider whether the complex system of decision-making could be simplified; and make the option "Full accreditation for a shorter period" more precise.

ENQA AGENCY REVIEW: ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS (RCVS)

OLIVER VETTORI, MAIKI UDAM, IVAN VARLYAKOV, AND REBECCA MAXWELL STUART
17 OCTOBER 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the review was to evaluate the way in which and to what extent the **Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)** fulfils *the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*.

The following activities of RCVS had to be addressed in the external review:

- Accreditation of veterinary degrees by RCVS
- Accreditation of Veterinary Nursing degrees by RCVS

RCVS is not a typical QA agency: it has a different history and a different constitution than most other agencies, so it took the review panel (also: “the panel” or “we”) some time to understand where the differences are relevant for the review. Many of the panel’s considerations do not comment on the quality of RCVS’s processes in absolute terms, but with regard to the requirements set in the ESG.

The panel found the self-assessment report (SAR) to be well structured and self-analytical. We also found plenty of evidence through interviews and additional documents that the relative weaknesses identified are taken seriously by the institution. Everyone we met seemed to be well aware of the self-assessment report (SAR) and of the areas for improvement mentioned there. Some progress has already been made, for example when it comes to the establishment of new appeals structures and processes.

RCVS is a professional organisation that conducts its business professionally and with great integrity. Everyone we met was well aware of the responsibility they were carrying. Arguably, it is a small profession but everything involved is very complex: complex structures, complex processes... This is even increased by the so called “justifiable differences” regarding procedures between veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. Most structures and processes carry a lot of history, and RCVS finds itself in a bit of tension between doing justice to what has been before (and also laws and rules that stem from the past) and the willingness/need for change.

In driving forward this change, RCVS can rely on its considerable strengths:

- It is a very mature organisation that can build upon decades of experience and considerable achievements and works as an independent body in their field.
- RCVS shows a spirit geared towards learning and improvement all across the institution and a professionally driven awareness of the importance of quality assurance: it is truly a learning organisation, very self-aware and conscious of its relevant environment
- The organisation seems to have a dedicated and experienced staff as well as professional and clearly engaged members in the Council and the various committees. Integrity and professionalism seem to be core values.
- RCVS has largely developed a sound and robust methodology aimed at training the best graduates (“day one competences”) that is well implemented and seems to be met with a high level of satisfaction and acceptance by the concerned parties.
- The institution is in a very favourable resource situation with a positive outlook, aided by a thorough budgeting process and regular risk assessment exercises.
- RCVS is actively communicating its activities and achievements, seems to be engaged in a constant dialogue with the stakeholders it deems relevant and is very transparent in its processes and outcomes. All stakeholders interviewed made their trust in RCVS explicit.
- We found clear documentation and a commendable approach towards transparency, making almost all important documents and decisions available to the public.

Yet, while trying to understand RCVS better and also view the organisation through the lens of the ESG, we also found a couple of issues that might need some (re)consideration and could be improved/further developed:

- There is no comprehensive QA policy that would help stakeholders outside of RCVS to understand the scope of their QA activities and how they are conducted and with what aim.
- The methodologies are sound, though with still considerable differences in the processes and activities between the area of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nursing. We appreciate the changes that have already been implemented in order to support convergence between the approaches, but would also like to encourage RCVS to work even more strongly towards acknowledging internal quality assurance as part 1 of the ESG seem only to be covered to some degree in the reviews, especially when it comes to Veterinary Nursing.
- Consistency of outcomes/processes seems to be achieved through the comprehensive committee structure including functional redundancies, but is not, to our knowledge, based on clear and transparent criteria that would also lead to the same decisions if the people involved did not know the respective institutions so well. Some inconsistencies between visit and final decision were also felt from the perspective of higher education institutions during the previous accreditation round, but they also see RCVS's willingness to improve its procedures.
- We found a rather small pool of reviewers when it comes to accrediting Veterinary Nursing programmes. We know that this is already being improved, but want to encourage RCVS to move from an inspection/examination approach to a real enhancement-oriented peer visit also in this field.
- We found some initial ideas and a good data basis, but no clear concept/time plan yet with regard to thematic reports. It is also not clear to us who would take responsibility for the thematic reports, considering they will take time and require a specific kind of expertise.
- In a similar way we still consider internal quality assurance (IQA) as an area for improvement. The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) plays a very important role for IQA approaching it from a risk assessment perspective but so far there seems no clear concept for developing IQA beyond an increase of feedback instruments; and responsibilities are not completely clear yet. In other words: who is wearing the QA hat?
- Last but not least, despite the impressive level of communication at RCVS and a well-developed discursive culture, stakeholder involvement is largely built on the existing committees and sub-committees. In this regard, it is worth mentioning, that no students are involved in any of the governance structures, although they are now a member of every visiting panel. Regarding the fact that students are core stakeholders when it comes to quality assurance and that student involvement is rapidly becoming a cornerstone of many developments in the European Higher Education Area, we want to encourage RCVS to even more actively approach this opportunity.

The panel's judgements are provided below.

Table 1. Review Panel's Judgements

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE	Substantially compliant
ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS	Fully compliant
ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE	Fully compliant
ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS	Partially compliant
ESG 3.5 RESOURCES	Fully compliant
ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT	Substantially compliant

ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES	Fully compliant
ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE	Substantially compliant
ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE	Fully compliant
ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES	Fully compliant
ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS	Substantially compliant
ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES	Partially compliant
ESG 2.6 REPORTING	Fully compliant
ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS	Fully compliant

Overall, we commend RCVS for all its achievements and for the internal quality culture it has developed over time. We appreciate its ambition to become a more active part of the European community of quality assurance professionals, but also strongly encourage the institution to also actively participate in the respective discourse and become more familiar with the way the ESG are interpreted and put into practice. In light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, RCVS is in compliance with the ESG.

INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the compliance of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG). It is based on an external review conducted between January 2018 (submission of SAR to the review panel) and June 2018 (submission of the review panel’s report to ENQA).

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

ENQA’s regulations require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they act in substantial compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015.

As this is RCVS’s first external review, the panel is expected to pay particular attention to the policies, procedures, and criteria in place, being aware that full evidence of concrete results in all areas may not be available at this stage.

REVIEW PROCESS

The 2018 external review of RCVS was conducted in line with the process described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the external review of RCVS was appointed by ENQA and composed of the following members:

- Oliver Vettori – Dean, Accreditations & Quality Management / Director Program Management & Teaching and Learning Support; WU – Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria; Chair of the panel, quality assurance professional (EUA nominee)

- Maiki Udam - Director of International Cooperation, Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA), Estonia; Secretary of the panel, quality assurance professional (ENQA nominee)
- Ivan Varlyakov – Professor, Agrarian Faculty, Trakia University - Stara Zagora, Bulgaria; Academic member (ENQA nominee)
- Rebecca Maxwell Stuart - PhD student in Business Management/Higher Education, Heriot-Watt University, The United Kingdom; Student member (ESU nominee)

During the review panel’s preparatory skype-meeting, which had been arranged by the ENQA review coordinator, each panel member was encouraged to use the ESG, in identifying evidence provided in SAR and supporting the conduct of the site visit. All review panel members submitted their comments and questions regarding the SAR’s alignment with the ESG to the Secretary in time before the site visit. Based on the feedback, the Secretary aligned the individual findings to the areas of inquiry. In consequence, they were linked to specific interview sessions.

Due to health issues, Professor Varlyakov was not able to participate in the site visit in person but his active contribution was assured through written comments and correspondence before the site-visit.

During the review panel’s kick-off session on-site, each panel member was designated to lead a specific interview session. During briefing sessions, the review panel checked repeatedly whether enough evidence had been collected for each standard of ESG. All panel members took notes during the interviews and shared them with the Secretary afterwards. During the final private meeting among panel members, all judgments, recommendations and suggestions on each standard were agreed collectively based on gathered evidence. After the site visit, the Secretary collated an initial draft reflecting the agreements reached on-site. The draft was circulated among panel members and finalized based on their written comments. Professor Varyakov did not participate in report-writing as he was absent from the site visit and lacked the evidence that was available on site.

The report reflects information gained from the SAR, interviews during the site visit, and the additionally provided documentation on site. RCVS had the opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft report.

Self-assessment report

RCVS produced a SAR, which provided the first evidence that the review panel used to draw its conclusions. The review panel received the SAR from the ENQA review coordinator in January 2018. Overall, the report addressed the relevant components following the report template as provided by ENQA. The panel found the report to be well structured and self-analytical and also found plenty of evidence through interviews and additional documents that the relative weaknesses identified are taken seriously by the institution. There were some nuances that needed further clarifications during the site visit (e.g. the structure of RCVS and responsibilities of different units) but in general the SAR provided a sound starting point for discussions on the extent to which RCVS adheres compliance to the ESG.

Everyone we met seemed to be well aware of the self-assessment report (SAR) and of the areas for improvement mentioned there. Some progress has already been made, for example when it comes to the establishment of new appeals structures and processes.

Site visit

The agenda for the site visit was prepared jointly between the Chair, the Secretary and RCVS's contact persons. Despite the fact that the final agenda had been agreed, in some interview sessions changes occurred during the site visit. The agenda, provided as Annex 1 to this report, identifies all interview partners, who actually participated in the meetings.

The site visit took place at RCVS's office premises between April 10 to 12, 2018. The work of the review panel started with an intensive kick-off meeting in the afternoon of April 10, 2018. The review panel did not use the opportunity to hold a preliminary meeting with the contact persons of the RCVS, instead they used the first evening for the meeting with the top management of RCVS (CEO and Presidential Team).

On April 11 and 12, 2018, the review panel met with the SAR preparation team, RCVS Council, RCVS's senior staff, representatives of HEIs, review pools and other external stakeholders. The review panel appreciated the openness of the interviewees and benefited a lot from all discussions.

The review panel would like to thank RCVS's contact persons and staff for all the time and effort invested in this review, for providing the panel with everything they needed for their work and for making them feel welcome and cared for. Finally, the review panel appreciated the support of the ENQA coordinator during the whole process.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF THE AGENCY

HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

As the RCVS is the statutory regulator of the veterinary professions in the UK – veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses - in this chapter we are focusing on the education system of these particular professions only. According to the SAR, the two professions have historically developed separately and have different legal foundations.

Professional veterinary degrees for veterinary surgeons are five or six years in length and are delivered in universities. Four year graduate entry routes are also available for students holding a relevant undergraduate degree. Veterinary surgeon degree programmes are set at Level 7 of both the Higher Education Qualifications Framework, and the European Qualifications Framework. There are currently eight universities offering veterinary degrees in the UK, seven of which are RCVS accredited and one new school, which has not yet been accredited at the time of this review.

Veterinary nursing degrees are usually three to four years in length for foundation degrees (FdSc) and Bachelor of Science Degrees (BSc) respectively. They are delivered in Higher Education Institutions. Veterinary nursing degrees are set at levels 5 and 6 in both the Higher Education Qualifications Framework, and the European Qualifications Framework.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

In the UK, all universities are subject to overall quality assurance monitoring by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The QAA is responsible for advising government (through the Privy

Council¹) on the granting of degree awarding powers to institutions of higher education, as well as overseeing universities' quality assurance systems for the award of degrees. QAA also provides guidance on the minimum threshold academic standards a student must achieve to be eligible for the award of a degree, in accordance with the national qualification frameworks. In the UK, higher qualification levels are set out in QAA's "UK Quality Code for Higher Education – The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies".

According to the SAR, RCVS is recognised as a Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) by the QAA, and takes part in a collaborative forum of Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies with the QAA in order to share best practice on accreditation, and facilitate the mutual exchange of relevant information relating to quality, making regulation more efficient and reducing duplication. A pre-condition for approval of their veterinary degrees is that veterinary schools must be part of an institution of higher learning accredited by an organisation recognised for that purpose by its country's government. RCVS only considers veterinary schools for approval, which are part of a university with government awarded authority to award degrees.

The panel learned from the interviews on site that when QAA moved in the beginning of this century from training (programme) accreditation to institutional audit and thematic analysis, university teachers and professional bodies, including RCVS, did not receive relevant and sufficient information about their profession any more. Therefore, professional bodies became more active in taking over the role of accreditors.

According to the RCVS website (<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/accrediting-primary-qualifications/accrediting-veterinary-degrees/visitations/>), veterinary schools were visited by QAA subject review teams during 1999 / 2000. In 2001, RCVS collaborated with the QAA and the (then) six UK veterinary schools to produce the Benchmark Statement for Veterinary Science which describes what a veterinary degree should cover, lists the knowledge and skills included within the courses and also includes an early version of our 'essential competences'.

RCVS routinely shares its accreditation information with QAA, as well as takes into account QAA's reports on institutions during its own accreditation activities. RCVS expects all universities offering veterinary surgeon and veterinary nursing programmes to meet all of QAA's quality assurance requirements, including complying with the national qualifications frameworks and other guiding principles, e.g. ESG, designed to ensure comparability in standards and quality of higher education qualifications. RCVS also expects the universities it monitors to comply with the QAA subject Benchmark Statements and QAA codes of practice.

For overseas veterinary schools accredited by RCVS, the veterinary surgeon degree awarded must be recognised as a professional qualification for veterinary surgeons by the relevant authorities (government and/or veterinary licensing body) in its own region/country.

RCVS

RCVS was established in 1844 by Royal Charter to be the governing body of the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom. Its statutory duties operate under primary national legislation and are

¹ The Privy Council is the mechanism through which interdepartmental agreement is reached on those items of Government business which, for historical or other reasons, fall to Ministers as Privy Counsellors rather than as Departmental Ministers. (<https://privycouncil.independent.gov.uk/>)

currently laid out in the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) 1966. RCVS is also designated as the “Competent Authority” for the veterinary profession under European Union legislation.

Under the RCVS Supplemental Royal Charter 2015, powers are granted for the setting of standards for the training and education of persons wishing to be entered in the register of veterinary nurses. It is this Charter that outlines the status of veterinary nurses as Associates of the College, and the Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC) as the body which sets training and education standards for veterinary nurses.

As the sole statutory regulator for the profession in the UK, the RCVS is responsible under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 for maintaining the register of veterinary surgeons eligible to practise in the UK, setting standards for veterinary education and regulating the professional conduct of veterinary surgeons.

The RCVS also exercises powers under its Royal Charter to award Fellowships and postgraduate specialist Diplomas and Certificates to veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and others.

According to the SAR, ‘Veterinary surgery’ as an area of work is protected by the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. This means that activities described as veterinary surgery can only be carried out by veterinary surgeons, with some exemptions. Veterinary surgeons must be registered with the RCVS in order to practise in the UK and have the initials ‘MRCVS’ (for Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons) or ‘FRCVS’ (for Fellow) after their names. The title ‘veterinary surgeon’ is protected by law: only those who are registered with the RCVS can use the title. With rights come responsibilities, and the same legislation that protects the veterinary profession also lays down the way in which the profession should be regulated. The title ‘veterinary nurse’, and the letters ‘RVN’, should only be used by those who have completed an approved veterinary nurse training course and are registered with the RCVS. There was a campaign to legally protect the title ‘veterinary nurse’ but this has not yet succeeded due to the current government’s reluctance to introduce further regulation.

RCVS’S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE

RCVS’s statutory and Charter duties are steered and governed by RCVS Council (the Council) of 42 members that meets three times a year. The Council is the most senior committee, which governs all the activities of the RCVS and ensures that all activities meet required standards.

The breakdown of Council members is as follows:

- 24 members: elected to Council by the profession itself
- 14 members: two nominated to Council by each of the seven UK Veterinary Schools
- 4 members: appointed by the Privy Council

The composition of the Council is defined in the Veterinary Surgeons Act. Officially no veterinary nurses belong to the Council, although in fact there is currently one representative of veterinary nurses filling a vet school place. Students have no seats in the Council. The Veterinary Surgeons Act is currently in the process of change and from July 2018 the Council will be smaller and contain also two formal places for veterinary nurses.

RCVS Council is supported by a system of committees, sub-committees and working parties, on which sit various members of Council and other appointed individuals. RCVS policy issues put forward by working parties or the secretariat go first to committees for recommendation and, if recommended, on to Council for approval or rejection.

The committees relevant for this review are presented below.

Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) will have oversight of the quality assurance processes as they relate to accreditation of veterinary nursing and veterinary degrees. The role of the ARC is one of assurance. This involves monitoring of reports and evidence demonstrating that RCVS is following its internal quality assurance procedures. It does not involve carrying out quality assurance activities, which are carried out by other committees.

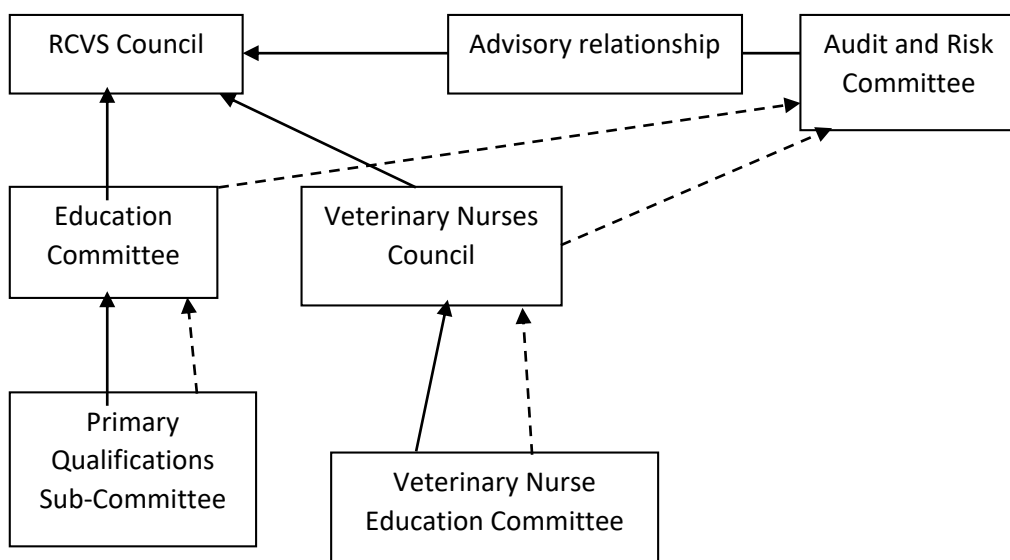
Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC) was established in 2002. Despite its name, it is also a committee. It comprises veterinary nurses, veterinary surgeons and lay people. VNC has overall responsibility for all matters concerning veterinary nurse training, post-qualification awards and the registration of qualified veterinary nurses. Veterinary nursing education decisions and monitoring have been devolved to the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee. Accreditation decisions are made by VNC based on the proposal of the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee.

Education Committee (EC) approves/accredits veterinary surgeon degrees, oversees the accreditation processes and makes final accreditation decisions for Veterinary Schools (surgeons).

Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee (PQSC) was created to manage the accreditation process of approving veterinary degrees, and consider reports of visitors (including follow-up reports) to veterinary schools, making recommendations to the Education Committee on recognition of undergraduate veterinary degrees.

Veterinary Nurse Education Committee (VNEC) is tasked with setting standards for veterinary nurse education and training, accrediting higher education institutions to award veterinary nursing professional qualifications, and monitoring the quality and delivery and assessment of veterinary nursing degrees.

Graph 1 illustrates the relationships between RCVS committees.



Graph 1. Relationships between RCVS committees

RCVS'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES

As in the SAR, regulation of the professional conduct of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses is one of the primary statutory duties of the RCVS. RCVS publishes a "Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons" and a "Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses", by which both professions must abide. Failure to comply with the code of conduct can result in disciplinary action, overseen by the RCVS, against the individual veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse. This could lead to the removal of their name from the RCVS register of members or RCVS register of veterinary nurses, thereby removing their right to practise their profession.

RCVS awards a range of qualifications for both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. For veterinary nurses, RCVS awards the Advanced Diploma in Veterinary Nursing qualification. For veterinary surgeons, RCVS awards the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice, which is a postgraduate modular certificate programme, set at Level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

In addition to postgraduate qualifications, RCVS also grants both 'Advanced Practitioner' and 'Specialist' status to veterinary surgeons, which are official recognitions of a veterinary surgeon's particular knowledge and skills in a designated field of veterinary practice. RCVS also awards its Fellowship (FRCVS), to those who have made significant contributions to the veterinary profession. These latter activities are not in scope to this review.

Setting and monitoring the standards for the education of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses is a key responsibility of the RCVS. The Veterinary Surgeons Act specifies that those who hold a veterinary degree from a UK veterinary school, which has received a Privy Council Recognition Order, are entitled to be registered as Members of the RCVS. Only Members of the RCVS have the legal right to practise veterinary surgery in the UK. Membership of the RCVS therefore constitutes the UK "licence to practise" for veterinary surgeons. The Act gives the RCVS the duty to supervise courses of study followed by students training to be veterinary surgeons in the UK, and specifies that the RCVS can appoint visitors to visit universities and to observe examinations. In addition to visiting universities, the Act allows the RCVS to request other information from universities "as to the course of study and examinations leading to the degree to which the recognition order relates". Under this provision, RCVS is able to monitor standards at UK universities on a regular basis, not just through the formal process of periodic accreditation visits.

The RCVS defines the competences that need to be met by the new graduate, and specifies the requirements for veterinary surgeon and veterinary nursing degree courses to be approved for registration purposes. The RCVS undertakes formal visitations to higher education institutions to ensure that veterinary degree standards are being maintained and, for UK universities, reports the recommendations to the Privy Council.

RCVS accreditation of veterinary surgeon and veterinary nursing programmes both involve the completion of a self-evaluation report by the institution before the visit, site visits to the institutions, completion of a report by visitors recording the institution's degree of compliance with RCVS published standards, the opportunity for the institution to provide comment on the report, and review and decisions on accreditation made by RCVS committees. Accredited institutions submit an annual monitoring report which is considered by the appropriate committee and in addition for veterinary nursing degrees there are annual quality assurance activities which can include site visits, telephone interviews and desk based research. The RCVS Audit and Risk Committee has oversight of

the whole quality assurance process. Due to the differences in the education and training models, there are also some differences in detail between veterinary and veterinary nurse quality assurance activities, however, accreditation of veterinary surgeon and veterinary nurse programmes broadly follow the same principles.

As of international activities related to veterinary surgeon training and accreditation, RCVS works collaboratively with several international agencies: in Europe with the European Association of Establishments of Veterinary Education (EAEVE), in Australia and New Zealand with the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC), in the U.S.A and Canada with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), and in South Africa with the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC). RCVS invites visitors and observers from these other international agencies to join its visitation teams and in some circumstances, undertakes joint visitations with these agencies.

For overseas accreditation activities organised by the RCVS, the processes are, according to the SAR, the same as those used for UK visitations, except publishing the assessment reports. RCVS does not publish the reports from overseas visitations when they are confidential in their home countries.

Where RCVS sends visitors on international visitations that are organised and run by international accrediting agencies, the processes used are those of the host accreditor. Work undertaken through the International Accreditors Working Group has resulted in alignment of both standards and accreditation processes. Following the visit, the report is considered by RCVS committees independently from the international agencies and RCVS makes its own accreditation decision based on the findings from this report.

The Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE) is a voluntary organisation that was founded in 2007 to accredit veterinary nurse education programmes in the EU. It currently has over 70 accredited programmes from five European countries, ten of these programmes are outside the UK. The Director of Veterinary Nursing at the RCVS is the Chair of the ACOVENE, and the RCVS currently provides the secretariat.

RCVS'S FUNDING

According to the SAR and interviews on site, the RCVS is a financially stable organisation, operating with a financial surplus. The majority of its income is derived from annual registration fees from veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses practising in the UK.

In addition, veterinary nursing institutions are charged for accreditation activities. Overseas veterinary schools are charged an accreditation fee. UK veterinary schools (surgeons) are not charged because accreditation of this particular profession is a statutory duty of RCVS.

FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF RCVS WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG)

ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

Evidence

RCVS is a complex organisation with various responsibilities related to the veterinary professions.

RCVS's mission statement, that is published on their website, is as follows: "The role of the RCVS is to safeguard the health and welfare of animals committed to veterinary care through the regulation of the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, thereby protecting the interests of those dependant on animals, and assuring public health. It also acts as an impartial source of informed opinion on relevant veterinary matters."²

The strategic plan 2017-2019 "Leadership, innovation and culture changes" contains *five ambitions*³:

A: Learning culture

B: Leadership and innovation

C: Continuing to be a First-rate Regulator (continuing to build on the foundations that have already been laid, we will work to ensure that the legislation and regulations that support us are not only fit for purpose today, but enable us to make the UK veterinary professions, and those allied professionals who work alongside them, the best that they can be into the future)

D: Global reach (to improve animal health and welfare on an international basis by raising veterinary standards overseas, contributing to the improvement of the One Health agenda and ensuring that our regulation keeps pace in a global market)

E: Our service agenda. The activities under ambitions are not explicitly connected to accreditation, except under ambition D (consider the global market for the RCVS accreditation of undergraduate veterinary education, particularly in the light of Brexit; investigate the global market for the RCVS accreditation of veterinary practices) and to some extent under ambition C (review outcomes for graduates, with consideration of the likely requirements from the profession and the public of the vets of tomorrow).

One of the primary roles under the College's Royal Charter and the Veterinary Surgeons Act is to set and monitor standards for veterinary education. In order to achieve this the RCVS undertakes

² <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/how-we-work/the-role-of-the-rcvs/>

³ <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/how-we-work/the-role-of-the-rcvs/strategic-plan/>

visitations to HEIs offering the veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse degrees to quality assure whether these courses meet the required standards set out by the RCVS.

As a quality assurance agency, RCVS accredits veterinary surgeon and veterinary nurse degree courses. It undertakes on average 1-2 visitations a year to UK universities offering the veterinary surgeon degree, and about the same number of overseas visitations depending on the schedules of those international accrediting agencies that RCVS collaborates with. This cycle of accreditation is repeated every three to seven years, depending on the outcome of the previous visitation, and could be yearly should the situation warrant it.

For the Veterinary Nursing higher education institution accreditation, RCVS conducts approximately three to four visitations a year to UK institutions. This cycle is repeated every five years.

Stakeholders are involved in the governance and work of the RCVS through their membership of RCVS Council committees, through working parties, through collaboration with the Veterinary Schools Council (a separate organisation whose board includes the Heads of each UK veterinary school), and through direct contact with each individual Veterinary Nursing school. Other representative bodies within the professions would also be consulted, for example, British Veterinary Nursing Association, British Veterinary Association and its species divisions.

Following the Veterinary Surgeons Act, the main stakeholders in the RCVS Council and committees are nominees of veterinary schools (especially surgeons) and elected members by the profession, i.e. practicing surgeons. In addition, both the RCVS Council and committees include independent lay persons (nominees of the universities and the Privy Council) who provide objective non-professional perspective and scrutiny of the governance. The Veterinary Surgeons Act is under revision and from July 2018 the amendments regarding the composition of the Council are expected to come into force. The main changes include the smaller number of council members as well as official inclusion of two representative veterinary nurses.

There are no students in the governing bodies. According to the interviews, students are involved formally in the visiting panels and informally in various lower-level discussions, for example, they were asked for feedback at the development of “Day One Competences” and they are also engaged in the working group of the Graduate Outcomes Programme. In both cases only veterinary surgeon students were involved. Students expressed their interest in being more engaged in governance of the RCVS.

Analysis

The RCVS seems to be well respected by veterinary schools, colleges and professional associations/employers in the UK and abroad. Its duties to set and safeguard standards for veterinary surgeons and nurses are defined in the College’s Royal Charter and the Veterinary Surgeons Act. Within the scope of the ESG, the RCVS undertakes regularly the following activities: accreditation of veterinary degrees and accreditation of Veterinary Nursing degrees, which is in accordance with the ESG standard under review.

The RCVS has a clear mission statement and an ambitious strategic plan for 2017-2019 but it does not explicitly define RCVS’s role in quality assurance, with exception of the ambition to investigate the global market for its accreditations and to review the graduates’ outcomes. Therefore, the review panel recommends to add a more comprehensive QA policy to the next strategic plan or the development of a separate QA policy document that would help stakeholders outside the RCVS to understand the aim and scope of its QA activities.

Although both the RCVS Council and committees contain most of the important stakeholders from educational institutions and the labour market, there are no students involved at the decision-making level. Regarding the fact that students are core stakeholders when it comes to quality assurance, and that student involvement is rapidly becoming a cornerstone of many developments in the European Higher Education Area, the review panel wants to encourage the RCVS to open its Council and committees to students – including both surgeons and nurses - as well. If there are statutory restrictions to engage them officially, they might participate as lay people.

As the representation of veterinary nurses is currently not supported by the Veterinary Surgeons Act, the review panel welcomes the plan to involve them as formal appointed/elected members in the future Council.

Panel recommendations

- Add a more comprehensive QA policy to the next strategic plan or develop a separate QA policy document that would help stakeholders outside the RCVS to understand the aim and scope of its QA activities.
- Engage students from both veterinary surgeons and nurses programmes to the decision making bodies of the RCVS.

Panel conclusion: Substantially compliant

ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS

Standard:

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

Evidence

The RCVS was created by virtue of a Royal Charter of 1844, superseded by the supplemental charters of 1967 and 2015. The latter reaffirmed the RCVS’s role and functions it may undertake in relation to veterinary education and brought veterinary nurses into full regulation under RCVS.

The RCVS is the sole statutory regulatory body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (UK). It operates under primary national legislation (Item 1, The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966), and is also designated as the “Competent Authority” for the veterinary profession under European Union legislation (VSA, Section 1a).

Its role as a Chartered regulator is to set, uphold and advance the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. Under the VSA, its primary roles are:

- a) to keep the register of veterinary surgeons eligible to practise in the UK,
- b) set and monitor standards for veterinary education, and
- c) regulate the professional conduct of veterinary surgeons through its Disciplinary Committee procedures.

The RCVS’s authority and statutory obligation to accredit veterinary schools comes under primary national legislation, the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. Section 3 of the Act specifies that those who hold a degree from a UK veterinary school that has received a recognition order are entitled to be registered as Members of the RCVS. Only Members of the RCVS have the right to practise veterinary

surgery in the UK. Membership of the RCVS therefore constitutes the UK “licence to practise” for veterinarians.

The activities of veterinary nurses are covered by Schedule 3 of the VSA, 1966. This sets out the professional and clinical jurisdiction of registered and student veterinary nurses, from which relevant veterinary nurse competences have been developed.

The 2015 Charter also gave authority to the Veterinary Nurses' Council (VNC) to set standards for veterinary nurse education, training and conduct. Under the RCVS Supplemental Royal Charter 2015, section 14, powers are granted for the setting of standards for the training and education of persons wishing to be entered in the register of veterinary nurses. It is this Charter that outlines the status of veterinary nurses as associates of the College, and the Veterinary Nurses Council as the body which sets training and education standards for veterinary nurses.

Analysis

As the sole statutory regulatory body for the veterinary profession in the UK, the RCVS is a mature organisation functioning on a solid legal basis. The outcomes of RCVS's activities, including accreditation, are accepted by the higher education institutions, professionals in the field and other stakeholders.

Panel conclusion: Fully compliant

ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE

Standard:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

Evidence

RCVS is an autonomous organisation independent of government, universities and any other veterinary organisations. The Veterinary Surgeons Act and Royal Charter determine the functions of the RCVS, which ensures independence from the institutions which it evaluates.

RCVS is not reliant on other organisations for its finances, as it derives most of its income from the annual registration (licence to practise) fees of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. Accreditation of UK veterinary surgeons degrees is a statutory obligation of RCVS and not charged from the HEIs, while accreditation of veterinary nurses degrees is financially covered by the accredited institutions.

RCVS visitors appointed to university accreditation visit teams act on behalf of the College and not on behalf of their constituent organisations. Their role is to assess whether an institution is meeting the RCVS standards of accreditation and report back their findings to RCVS committees, who use this information to make a judgement on the accreditation status. The RCVS visitor panel contains individuals from all spheres of the veterinary professions ranging from university academics to practitioners in corporate or private practice. Personal interests are discouraged to ensure that procedures and decisions are based on visitors' expertise and not interests which may conflict with RCVS values and processes of accreditation. Prior to the visit, all visitors are obliged to attend training where their role and behaviour during the visit is discussed.

RCVS has a clear no-conflict-of-interest policy for both visitors and decision-makers. Visitors are required to declare that they have no conflicts of interest when joining a visitation team, so that they can operate impartially without any prejudice towards the university being accredited.

The process of decision-making is multi-leveled, starting with the proposal from the visitation team to the respective sub-committee - Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee for veterinary surgeons and Veterinary Nurse Education Committee for veterinary nurses – and after discussions on the sub-committee level the accreditation proposals are forwarded to the Education Committee (veterinary surgeons) and Veterinary Nurses Council who make the final accreditation decisions.

Where a member of a committee or sub-committee involved in the accreditation process has acted as part of the visitation team or has other links to the university under discussion, they leave the room and therefore would play no part in the making of recommendations on accreditation status.

During the interviews with visitors and HEIs it was confirmed that there has never been any problem with impartiality of visitors or decision-making.

The Audit and Risk Committee assesses regularly the possible risks regarding independence and impartiality of processes and people. In addition, HEIs or other interested parties have the opportunity to address the Privy Council when they feel that outcomes or processes have been influenced by any third party.

Analysis

The RCVS's organisational and professional independence is ensured by legislative acts and structural redundancies.

The RCVS is aware that there are a limited number of professionals and experts in the field, and in most cases they are inter-related through work, former studies, membership in RCVS's Council or committees etc. Under the given circumstances, the RCVS has made great efforts and achieved good results in minimizing the possible risks of partiality regarding visitors and decision-making. This has been achieved through a high level of organisational integrity and transparency, a clear no-conflict-of-interests policy and two-level decision-making processes: outcomes are discussed both on sub-committee and committee level. Therefore, the review panel can conclude also that independence of formal outcomes is ensured.

Panel conclusion: Fully compliant

ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Standard:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

Evidence

RCVS publishes reports on veterinary surgeon degrees and from 2018 also on veterinary nurses degrees. Both from the SAR and from interviews it became clear for the review panel that RCVS has hitherto not conducted any analysis about the findings of their external quality assurance activities based on the reports or other evidence.

During the interview with the CEO and the current and future presidents the review panel learned that there are ideas and potential to start with analysis in the nearest future.

The RCVS staff and Council members have had an initial brainstorming during which they already have come up with topics and plans for thematic analysis. For example, during last 5 years RCVS has conducted interviews about outcomes assessment and work placement. The Graduate Outcomes Project is expected to be ready by mid-2019 and the project outcomes will be published after that.

The review panel was informed that RCVS is planning to hire a new research officer and the main responsibility for thematic analysis will lie with the Audit and Risk Committee. However, when interviewing ARC, they seemed to be surprised and not aware of such plans. ARC said that they would push this responsibility back as thematic analysis would be more of an executive task.

Despite some confusion related to thematic analysis, RCVS publishes extensively about its activities on their website: newsletters, annual reports, guidances, RCVS facts etc.⁴

Analysis

Already during the self-evaluation process, the RCVS found thematic analysis as one of their improvement area that they need to address in the nearest future. During the years, lots of data has been gathered but most of it has not been used or analysed.

The review panel witnessed sufficient potential regarding the data, enthusiasm of the RCVS staff as well as some initial plans for coming years. However, the plans should be developed further and made more specific.

At the moment, the division of roles and responsibilities regarding thematic analyses seems unclear for everyone at RCVS. The review panel agrees that it should be an executive responsibility, taken by permanent staff and not by any committee.

As it is the first review for RCVS and the College has already taken steps to start with systematic analysis in the nearest future, e.g. through data collection and internal discussions, the panel sees enough ground to find the agency partially compliant with regard to this standard. The panel has made it clear to RCVS, though, that a lot of work needs to be done to meet this standard at the next review.

Panel recommendations

- Develop a clear concept and plan for thematic analysis.
- Set roles and responsibilities among staff members for analysing and publishing general findings of RCVS's external quality assurance activities.

Panel conclusion: Partially compliant

ESG 3.5 RESOURCES

Standard:

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

⁴ <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/>

Evidence

The review panel was informed both via the SAR and interviews that RCVS has 118 staff members, of whom 4-5 are directly involved in accreditation activities. RCVS also uses casual workers as examiners and office holders. Besides that, a considerable amount of work is done in various committees and sub-committees.

Human resource (HR) department manages a training budget that is £600-700 per head. There is an appraisal and re-appraisal scheme that is focused on development. Training that is applicable for larger groups of staff is done in-house, for example excel, mental health, time management, personal effectiveness, interview skills etc. Staff members are also encouraged to participate in professional organisations, their membership fees are paid by the RCVS.

The budgetary situation of the RCVS is very resilient. The RCVS operates with a financial surplus and healthy reserves. It has sufficient financial resource to operate its accreditation activities. Since RCVS is not funded by the UK Government, it is not subject to budget cuts by a higher authority, and thus is able to maintain its core functions via its income, the majority of which is derived from annual registration fees from veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses practising in the UK. Some of the interviewees mentioned that Brexit may be a risk for predicting future incomes as an essential number of graduates paying register fees are from outside the UK. The ARC explained that the risk is minimal because of the reserves that the RCVS has.

Total income for 2016 was £10.03m (in 2015, £9.49m). Expenditure for 2016 was £9.98m (in 2015, £9.18m).

Accreditation activities are given priority in budget planning, as the maintenance of education standards is one of the primary responsibilities of the RCVS.

Veterinary Nursing institutions and overseas veterinary schools are charged an accreditation fee.

Analysis

The review panel is convinced that both human and financial resources in the RCVS are adequate and well managed. Recruitment and training system of staff assures appropriately skilled people for respective positions. The training budget is generous and supports people's development. The RCVS is operating with healthy reserves and accreditation activities are given priority in budget planning. The funds are allocated appropriately to various activities essential for a high-quality and sustainable agency, e.g., motivation package and improvement of staff, information events/materials for universities and colleges etc.

Panel conclusion: Fully compliant

ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

Evidence

The documents “Awarding Organisation and Higher Education Institution Handbook”⁵ and “RCVS Accreditation Standards and procedures for the accreditation of veterinary degrees”⁶ are published on the RCVS website and contain the details of the quality processes involved with the accreditation of veterinary degrees, and the accreditation of veterinary nurse qualifications.

The accreditation standards and procedures also set out standards for recruitment and training of visitors, which ensure that all those involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically. Visitors normally attend a visit as an observer before joining a visit team as a full visitor. Visiting teams attend training before each visit and guidance for visitors is included in the “RCVS Standards and procedures for the accreditation of veterinary degrees” and the “Awarding Organisation and Higher Education Institution Handbook”. Both training and guidance include standards of behaviour expected of visitors.

The RCVS assures the competence and development of its permanent staff through training and an appraisal system.

The RCVS has organisational policies that guard against intolerance or discrimination of any kind within all its activities (“The way we work- RCVS culture”⁷). Staff are recruited in line with these policies and have qualifications and experience appropriate to their roles. Staff receive training and are encouraged to undertake further developmental activities to ensure their competence is maintained. RCVS visitors must also abide by the behavioural guidelines and conflict of interest policies in its visitation procedures handbooks.

RCVS has recently started to collect formal feedback from the accredited institutions and visiting teams of VS degrees. Coordinators of VN accreditation rely more on informal feedback – thank-you letters, phone calls – from the institutions.

According to the SAR, the RCVS does not use subcontractors for its accreditation work.

RCVS veterinary institution accreditation visit reports are in the public domain and are published on the RCVS website, so that previous decisions and reports are transparent. Accreditation reports for veterinary nursing institutions started to be published from January 2018. The minutes of Education Committee meetings and Veterinary Nurse Council meetings are published on the RCVS website, so that decision making is transparent. RCVS is subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and must release any further background documents on request. There is an appeals procedure and the ultimate check is that RCVS’s decisions as a public body may be legally challenged through the process of Judicial Review. This system of checks and balances guards against any risk of inconsistency in decision making.

As of international activities related to veterinary surgeon training and accreditation, RCVS works closely with several international agencies: The European Association of Establishments of Veterinary Education (EAEVE), the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC), the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), and the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC). It helps to make sure that also outside the UK only recognised institutions/programmes will be accredited. In some cases, RCVS undertakes joint visitations with the above-mentioned agencies.

⁵ <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/awarding-organisation-and-higher-education-institution-handbook/>

⁶ <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/accrediting-primary-qualifications/>

⁷ <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/the-way-we-work/>

For overseas accreditation activities organised by the RCVS, the processes are, according to the SAR, the same as those used for UK visitations, except publishing the assessment reports. RCVS does not publish the reports from overseas visitations when they are confidential in their home countries.

Where RCVS sends visitors on international visitations that are organised and run by international accrediting agencies, the processes used are those of the host accreditor.

There is no one document describing the internal quality assurance (IQA) policies and responsibilities. During the self-assessment process, the RCVS itself discovered that IQA is one of the areas that needs more attention in the very near future. According to the SAR and interviews, internal processes are in place, but do not include any system for identifying themes and trends, or looking at whether the processes were operating as they should and continued to be fit for purpose.

The RCVS has already planned concrete activities to overcome this deficiency: introduction of work plans and annual reports that will be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee which is also responsible for overseeing the quality assurance processes as they relate to accreditation of veterinary nursing and veterinary degrees, and checks whether the RCVS is following its internal quality assurance procedures.

Analysis

The RCVS applies high professional and ethical standards for its permanent staff and visitors, and has published accreditation standards and other documents (for example, minutes of the committees and the council) that make its activities fully transparent.

Formal feedback mechanisms from accredited institutions were recently introduced for VS degrees but there is still a reliance on informal communication at VN accreditation. The review panel advises the RCVS to develop an even more systematic approach for collecting feedback and to align the procedures for accreditations of VS and VN degrees whenever possible.

The review panel found a very reflective culture and high integrity in the RCVS, but the formal IQA policy was missing and responsibilities for introducing and maintaining the IQA system were still unclear. It would be worth to consider developing a policy document for IQA that includes the most important activities and defines the responsibilities.

Panel recommendations

- Apply a systematic approach for collecting feedback and align the procedures at accreditations of VS and VN degrees whenever possible.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

As there is no one document describing the IQA policies and responsibilities, the RCVS is invited to consider developing a formal policy document. It is suggested that this document includes formal procedures of IQA, articulation of responsibilities and formalised feedback structures to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose. This would allow for greater transparency and recording of formalised IQA systems.

Panel conclusion: Substantially compliant

ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

Standard:

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

Evidence

As it is the first ENQA review for the RCVS, it is not relevant to assess this standard.

However, according to the SAR the RCVS has voluntarily participated in the United States Department of Education (USDE) review in 2015. In order for U.S. students to be eligible to participate in U.S. federal student aid programs, the veterinary medical school's accrediting agency must be approved by the USDE. In applying for accreditation, RCVS had to show how its standards and procedures complied with the "Guidelines for Requesting an Acceptability Determination for a Foreign Veterinary Accrediting Agency (Guidelines)". USDE department staff reviewed the processes and accreditation standards used by the RCVS, and determined that the RCVS had an acceptable quality assurance system for evaluating the quality of education offered at the veterinary schools it accredits. This process is cyclical, with re-accreditation occurring every six years and RCVS's next USDE review will be conducted in 2021.

In addition, the Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE) re-accredits the RCVS once every five years, via application as set out against the "ACOVENE Regulator Accreditation Criteria".

In its SAR, the RCVS expresses its readiness to undergo a formal cyclical external review by ENQA, should membership be granted following this initial review.

Analysis

Although it is the first time for the RCVS to undergo ENQA review, the College has successfully passed the voluntary review of USDE and is also accredited by ACOVENE. The next USDE review is going to take place in 2021.

Panel conclusion: Fully compliant

ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

Evidence

According to the SAR, both the veterinary surgery and Veterinary Nursing standards for accreditation include a requirement for effective internal quality assurance processes within the institutions being accredited. The statement is supported by a matrix showing which standards in VS and VN accreditation cover the ESG standards in Part 1 (see the matrix below). It was also stated by the interviewees that all ESG IQA standards are covered during the accreditation of VN and VS degrees.

When reading the accreditation standards and accreditation reports, the review panel found supporting evidence regarding the VS degrees but did not find any clear reference to student-centred learning in VN accreditation standards and reports.

Analysis

The main aim of RCVS accreditation is to assure that all graduates have achieved “Day One Competences” and internal quality assurance (ESG Part 1) does not seem to be the biggest concern, especially regarding VN degrees.

However, the review panel found enough evidence from the SAR, accreditation standards and reports to conclude that for VS degrees all requirements of ESG Part 1 are met.

VN degree accreditation is more an inspection-type review, and the panel did not find any clear evidence for ESG Standard 1.3, especially about student-centred learning and teaching (respecting the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths, using different modes of delivery etc.) Although in the context of RCVS’s aims and responsibilities the accountability-oriented assessment is acceptable, we would recommend to develop VN accreditation methodology closer to the one of VS, and through this increase the focus on IQA, especially student-centred learning, also in VN reviews.

Panel recommendations

- Develop VN accreditation methodology closer to the one of VS, and through this increase the focus on IQA in VN reviews, with especial attention to student-centred learning.

Panel conclusion: Substantially compliant

	VN Standard 1 The organisation	VN Standard 2 Sustainability	VN Standard 3 Qualification design and delivery	VN Standard 4 Qualification design and delivery	VN Standard 5 Assessment	VN Standard 6 Centre approval and quality management	VN Standard 7 Self evaluation and quality assurance	VS Standard 1 Organisation and reporting	VS Standard 2 Finances	VS Standard 3 Facilities and equipment	VS Standard 4 Animal resources	VS Standard 5 Information resources	VS Standard 6 Students	VS Standard 7 Admission and progression	VS Standard 8 Academic and support staff	VS Standard 9 Curriculum	VS Standard 10 Assessment	VS Standard 11 Research programmes, continuing and higher degree education	VS Standard 12 Outcomes assessment			
Part 1 of the ESG																						
1.1 Policy for quality assurance			x	x	x	x		x					x					x	x	x	x	
1.2 Design and approval of programmes			x	x	x	x					x							x	x		x	
1.3 Student centred learning, teaching and assessment			x			x					x	x	x	x			x	x	x		x	
1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification			x	x	x										x				x			
1.5 Teaching staff					x	x											x	x			x	
1.6 Learning resources and student support			x			x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x		x			x	
1.7 Information management									x												x	
1.8 Public information					x											x					x	
1.9 On-going mentoring and periodic review of programmes *																	x		x	x		x
1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance**					x																	x

ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

Evidence

RCVS has full statutory authority under the Veterinary Surgeons Act to set standards and operate the accreditation process for veterinary degrees. The standards are reviewed periodically: according to the SAR, the most recent revision of veterinary surgeon standards was completed in May 2016, and Veterinary Nursing standards in November 2016. The aim of accreditation is to ensure that institutions providing VS and VN degrees meet the set standards.

As stated in the SAR, revisions of the veterinary surgeon standards are discussed with the Veterinary Schools Council (VSC), which comprises the heads of all UK veterinary schools. This provides the VSC with the opportunity to contribute to the design and improvement of RCVS standards, and ensures that the aims of RCVS accreditation remain clear and coherent for all parties involved in the process.

Due to RCVS's tight contacts with other accrediting agencies around the world and participation in the International Accreditors Working Group (IAWG), the College continually benchmarks and improves its standards according to the international best practices.

The educational institutions and visiting experts can give feedback related to the standards both formally and informally. During the interview with the experts, an interviewee described how the visiting team modified an unclear accreditation rubric in the middle of the process and how it was welcomed and accepted by the RCVS.

The accreditation reports contain a series of commendations, recommendations and suggestions (VS), and areas of good practice, areas for improvement and actions required (VN), all aimed at assisting the schools in meeting the published standards of accreditation.

For VS degree accreditation, there is a formal two-month consultation period during the committee process (as laid out in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, Section 5, (4) (b)), during which time the university has an opportunity to comment and reflect on how they intend to meet the recommendations and suggestions and provide a formal response, which is considered by RCVS committees as part of the accreditation process. Veterinary schools are also encouraged to show continued improvement through their annual monitoring reports.

Veterinary Nursing accreditation activities are usually combined with the University's QAA validation events, to reduce the need for separate meetings and document reviews.

In the Veterinary Nursing accreditation report, a comment is made next to each subsection of every standard as set out in the veterinary nurse accreditation standards, and areas for action are identified at the front of the report based on the findings before and during the accreditation visit. Once this report is finalised, it is sent to the institution to check for factual accuracy and to agree the timeline for compliance with the actions identified (where applicable). The evidence is submitted, and a confirmation letter is sent to the institution to confirm this. The findings are then presented to the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee, which decides whether to grant or withhold provisional or continued accreditation.

Both VS and VN institutions need to present annual monitoring reports to the RCVS, which may raise a question of reasonable workload. During the interviews, the representatives of institutions did not oppose the need for annual reports; on the contrary, they welcomed the periodic opportunity to show their improvements.

Analysis

The review panel found the aims and standards of external quality assurance fit for purpose. The main stakeholders – veterinary surgeons and nurses as well as all heads of UK veterinary schools – contribute to the design and improvement of RCVS standards.

In addition, the RCVS has demonstrated its willingness and flexibility to change the standards and rubrics based on the input from review panels.

Although the main aim of VS and VN accreditation is strongly related to accountability – e.g., to ensure animals’ welfare – both accreditations also give a series of proposals for further improvement.

All accredited institutions are asked for annual monitoring reports demonstrating their current state and improvements made.

Panel commendations

- The RCVS is commended for its well-structured and systematic follow-up process that allows institutions to demonstrate their improvements based on experts’ recommendations between accreditations.

Panel conclusion: Fully compliant

ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

Evidence

As stated in the SAR, accreditation standards for both veterinary surgeon and veterinary nurse degrees have been developed over a number of years and are available in the public domain on the RCVS website. Both accreditation standards have common themes; however, Veterinary Nursing degrees are mostly delivered through a devolved system of further education colleges and training practices which necessitates further layers of standard setting in addition to the primary Awarding Organisation and Higher Education Standards. These can be found in the centre and training practice standards section in the “Awarding Organisation and Higher Education Institution Handbook”. “RCVS standards and procedures for the accreditation of veterinary degrees” can be found on the RCVS website.

Both VS and VN accreditation consist of self-evaluation reports, followed by a site visit.

The review panel was informed during an interview that in the case of a VN accreditation, the visit is organised jointly with a QAA panel that is put together by the university within the process of self-accreditation. However, there is no reference to it in the accreditation reports.

All findings of an accreditation are summarised in the accreditation report, complemented with commendations, recommendations and suggestions (VS), and areas of good practice, areas for improvement and actions required (VN).

For both VS and VN, the RCVS reporting process includes a stage of factual checking by the university. Once the report has been finalised by the visiting team, it is forwarded to the institution for a factual check, and once this has been completed and any factual changes made, the report is taken to RCVS committees for consideration.

Following review by RCVS Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee, the report is then sent back to the university. The Veterinary Surgeons Act provides that the university must have two months after receiving the final visit report in which to submit its comments and response to RCVS. It is at this stage that the university can consider the recommendations and suggestions made by RCVS and respond with their plans to address them. Once the University has submitted its response to RCVS, this is taken, together with the final visitation report, back to the Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee for consideration. At this stage the sub-committee makes a recommendation on the accreditation status, having taken everything into consideration, including the university's response to the recommendations and suggestions.

A fairly similar procedure is also valid for VN accreditation. Where there are significant actions required, the University will be invited, in addition to correct any factual mistakes, to complete an action plan detailing how they will be completed. This must include specific dates, together with the name of the responsible officer involved. The action plan must be received one month following receipt of the report. Actions set will have variable timelines, depending on their nature. Once the institutions have completed the actions required, a risk assessment is compiled for the university. The report and any additional evidence are then presented to the Veterinary Nurses Education Committee for accreditation decision.

As turned out from the interviews, the expert panels of VN accreditation can see the university's response and action plan, and comment on it if necessary. The panels of VS accreditation are not provided with the universities' responses.

The VS accreditation reports have always been published on RCVS's website; from 2018 this will also be the case with reports of VN.

Both VS and VN institutions need to present annual monitoring reports to the RCVS.

Analysis

The RCVS has implemented all the necessary parts of external quality assurance: there is self-evaluation by the institutions, review visits by experts, published assessment reports, and clear and sound procedures for follow-up (see also ESG 2.2 in this report). Besides reports, the accreditation standards and procedures are also made public on RCVS's website.

To raise the responsibility of expert panels and make them more involved in the process, it might be worth sharing the universities' responses after accreditation with all panels, including VS.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

As an area of good practice, expert panels of VN accreditation can see the university's response and action plan, and comment on the reply if necessary. It is suggested that expert panels of VS accreditation are also provided the opportunity to view the university's responses.

Panel conclusion: Fully compliant

ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

Evidence

According to the SAR, accreditation visits for both veterinary surgeon and veterinary nursing degrees are undertaken by expert teams with clear criteria for appointment, training, and policies for managing conflicts of interest. The requirements and procedures for appointing people to the visiting teams and the conflict of interest policy are defined in the *"RCVS standards and procedures for the accreditation of veterinary degrees"*⁸, and in the *"Awarding Organisation and Higher Education Institution Handbook"*⁹.

RCVS offers training days to all members of the site visit team, including new visitors and observers. The training provided is slightly differently for VS and VN visitor teams.

For VS visitors, the one-day training usually takes place around a month before the site visit and uses the institution's self-evaluation report as the basis for teaching about the standards and procedures of a visitation. This day also gives experienced visitors a chance to refresh their knowledge about how the visitation process works, as well as drawing out queries and questions about the self-evaluation report that the team will want to explore during the visitation. No new team member can attend as a visitor unless they have attended a training session or a briefing meeting prior to the visit. New members of a visit team must also normally have attended a visit as an observer to gain experience before being appointed as a full member. There is also an additional briefing one day before the visit. All visitors we met during the interview had passed the training and followed the first visit as observers. For international visitors, group teleconference briefing meetings are held a few weeks in advance of joint international visits to give the team an opportunity to meet and discuss initial impressions of the self-evaluation report from the university being visited. International team members of visit teams will normally have benefited from visitor training provided by their country's accrediting agency.

As there are fewer visitors for VN institutions, there is usually one training event for all experts of this year's accreditation.

The team of experts of VS accreditation comprises individuals with expertise in veterinary basic sciences, animal production, veterinary public health and food hygiene, and clinical studies. The

⁸ <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/accrediting-primary-qualifications/>

⁹ <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/awarding-organisation-and-higher-education-institution-handbook/>

RCVS strives towards making sure that the competences/skills of the visitors are diverse and well-balanced. At least one of the clinical visitors must be a veterinary surgeon in private practice. Visitors must hold a degree that is registerable with RCVS (except for visitors in basic sciences who must hold a PhD in their subject) or be a currently licensed veterinarian in good standing in another jurisdiction acceptable to RCVS. It is the responsibility of the Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee to put together/approve the visitation panels.

The visitation team comprises a chair of the visitors, who is responsible for leading the team during the visitation, visitors with the mix of expertise defined above, a student representative and where appropriate, one or more observers. The student will be nominated through the visitation team or through the Association of Veterinary Students (AVS). The student can be either studying on its final year or graduated up to 2 years ago. It was stated in the SAR that through RCVS's collaborative work with other accrediting agencies, experienced international visitors are almost always a part of a typical visitation team. It was also proved by the experts' list in the accreditation reports.

The RCVS conducts periodic revision of the visitors list, excluding inactive candidates. Recently the RCVS has started to ask for feedback from both visitors and accredited institutions about the accreditation process. So far the outcomes of feedback have not influenced the formation of panels.

VS visitors are responsible for writing the report, with each visitor assigned areas of responsibility relating to one or more of the Standards. Visitors act as either primary or secondary reporters on the standards assigned, so that the report is the culmination of more than one individual's findings. The student representative will normally contribute to the reporting on Standard 6 – Students, on matters relating to student welfare. Towards the end of the visitation, all visitors will have the opportunity to input to the full report across all Standards. Observers have no reporting responsibilities, as they are there either for training purposes or to oversee the visitation process. The chair has final authority on the content of the report. RCVS staff act as secretary to the visitation team, coordinating the reporting process and compiling the report as chapters are completed.

As for VN accreditation, the visitation teams are formed by the Senior RCVS Veterinary Nursing team. A visitor team consists of at least one member of the Senior RCVS Veterinary Nursing team, a visitor selected from a voluntary pool of experts, and a student representative. The student representative has been introduced to the panel very recently. Some accreditation reports that were provided to us indicated that just a couple of years ago the review panel consisted only of two members of RCVS senior staff.

VN accreditation reports are produced by the senior RCVS Veterinary Nursing team member. The other members of the visitation team contribute to the drafting of the report, collaborating on their areas of responsibility or expertise.

In the SAR and during the interviews, RCVS admitted that due to a relatively small pool of experts for veterinary education accreditation, it can be a challenge finding impartial professionals to serve the various committee activities, especially as a strict conflict of interest policy applies. The RCVS is continuously striving to retain impartial committee members, and to network with members and associates of the RCVS to recruit future suitable members. One method for achieving this

impartiality, proposed by the RCVS themselves, is through the use of lay members on committees, comprising professionals from other sectors.

During the self-evaluation process, the RCVS has recognised benefits of more unified approach to recruitment and training of VS and VN visitors.

Analysis

RCVS has developed and implemented clear criteria for visitor appointment, training, and policies for managing conflict of interest.

The VS accreditation is supported by peers with the wide range of expertise, including a student representative, practitioner, and in most cases also an international expert.

Although recently the student member and an independent expert have been added to the VN visitors team, the composition of the team is still too narrow and relies too heavily on the senior staff of the RCVS. This format is more suitable for an inspection than for other forms of external quality assurance. The panel acknowledges RCVS's readiness to expand the VN pools further, and welcomes RCVS's plan to make VS and VN visitor recruitment and training more similar and comparable.

The review panel recognises RCVS's challenges finding impartial experts for visiting teams due to the limited number of professionals in the veterinary field. However, we saw the effort and commitment by the College to deal with this issue and appreciate their approach to selection and training of experts as well as to the strict and consistent no-conflict-of-interest policy. During our visit we did not find any evidence or indication that may jeopardize this policy.

Panel recommendations

- At VN accreditation, pursue the widening of review pools and avoid relying too heavily on the senior staff of RCVS.

Panel conclusion: Substantially compliant

ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

Evidence

On the RCVS's website there are published criteria/options for both VS and VN accreditation decisions.

Options for decision on accreditation of veterinary surgeon degrees are as follows:

- a) **Accreditation for seven years** subject to the usual periodic (annual) reports. If periodic reports are satisfactory, re-accreditation will be subject to a visitation in the seventh year.

- b) **Accreditation for a shorter period** if significant deficiencies are identified: accreditation will be subject to the deficiencies being addressed within a specified period and subject to satisfactory periodic reports. The RCVS will normally undertake a re-visit before the accreditation period expires to monitor progress in addressing any identified concerns. This may be a full re-visit covering all the standards (normally held over one week) or a more focussed re-visit that concentrates on progress with addressing specific deficiencies (which would normally be held over one or two days). Consideration of a shorter period of accreditation subject to conditions will apply where there are either a) one or more major deficiencies, or b) a series of lesser deficiencies which, taken together, could have a significant impact on students' education, but which are deemed to be rectifiable within a given period of time.
- c) **Accreditation may be denied.** This category applies exceptionally where the RCVS considers that the deficiencies are so serious that they are unlikely to be rectifiable within a reasonable period of time. It is, in effect, a final warning to a school that if urgent action is not taken RCVS will move to terminal accreditation.
- d) **Terminal accreditation** may apply if the school is unable to meet RCVS's standards, and/or if a school voluntarily closes. For previously accredited UK veterinary schools where accreditation is denied by RCVS, the final decision to revoke or suspend their Recognition Order would be made by the Privy Council (see below). The procedures for terminal accreditation must be followed by the veterinary school. For non-UK schools, if accreditation is denied for a programme that was previously accredited, the school may be placed on "terminal accreditation" and it will be the responsibility of the school to present an immediate plan to RCVS for approval showing how the deficiencies will be addressed to allow adequate progress of the existing students to meet RCVS Day One Competences.
- e) **Accreditation is denied.** This option would be relevant where neither 'Accreditation may be denied' nor 'Terminal accreditation' would be applicable. It applies when RCVS considers that the deficiencies are sufficiently serious that the school should not receive accreditation. The veterinary school would be able to request a re-visit once it had addressed the deficiencies identified.

Options for decisions on accreditation of Veterinary Nursing qualifications (subject to annual quality monitoring) are as follows:

- a) **Full accreditation** for 5 years is given to qualifications that meet, or exceed, all of the accreditation standards.
- b) **Full accreditation for a shorter period** if significant deficiencies are identified in an existing programme: accreditation will be subject to the deficiencies being address within a specific period. The RCVS will normally undertake a full programme review before the end of the accreditation.
- c) **Provisional accreditation** new qualifications that have made substantial progress towards meeting the accreditation standards. Once the first cohort of students completes the qualification, a provisionally accredited University may apply to the RCVS for full accreditation. Students undertaking provisionally accredited qualifications will be required to pass the RCVS pre-registration examination. Provisional accreditation will not normally exceed five years.

- d) **Accreditation denied** where the RCVS considers that the deficiencies are so serious that they are unlikely to be rectifiable within a reasonable period of time.
- e) **Terminal accreditation** may apply if the University is unable to meet RCVS's standards, or if they voluntarily close. The procedures for terminal accreditation must be followed.

There are 5 options for both VS and VN decision-making, although in fact only two (Full accreditation and Full accreditation for a shorter period) have been used so far. During the last 5 years, only one university has got shorter – 3 years - accreditation of VS degrees. When we asked during the interview whether the representative of this institution understood why they got accreditation for 3 years and not for 2, 4, 5, 6 or 7 years, he claimed that initially it was not clear at all, especially as the oral feedback after the site visit was very positive. He admitted though that the process has been improved since then.

The RCVS claims that the consistency of decisions is achieved through the multi-layer committee structure: each stage of the accreditation process builds on the previous stage. Visitors on the site visit make a judgement based on their findings. For example, for VS accreditations, the Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee makes a recommendation on the accreditation status based on the visit report, and the Education Committee makes the decision on accreditation taking into consideration both findings from the visitors and recommendations from PQSC.

As stated by RCVS, all committees will look at accreditation decisions from previous visitations to ensure that procedures and standards are being applied consistently and fairly.

Analysis

Although the criteria for decision-making exist and are published, in reality the complexity of options, especially the flexibility of defining “shorter period” accreditations, compromises the transparency and consistency of decisions. So far consistency of decisions is achieved through the multi-layer committee structure and due to the discursive and reflective approach of the committee members, but the decision-making is not based on an overarching policy and clear and transparent criteria. There is a number of different options for decisions that makes the system rather complicated. It may become especially a problem when accrediting overseas. The need for this complicated system is also questionable as in reality only two options out of five have been used so far.

Panel recommendations

Accreditation decisions should be confinable and justifiable. Therefore, the review panel recommends to

- consider whether the complex system of decision-making could be simplified;
- make the option “Full accreditation for a shorter period” more precise.

Panel conclusion: Partially compliant

ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

Evidence

The accreditation reports of VS accreditation are published on the RCVS website. The reports of international accreditations have not been published because it has not been the practice in the host country. Reports of VN accreditation visits will be published on the website from 2018.

Visitation reports follow the same structure for each institution visited and are presented in a consistent manner, although the layout of the reports produced for VS visitations is different from those generated by VN accreditation visits. Both reports include a summary of findings and comments, which analyse the information presented in the institution's self-evaluation report, and a list of actions or suggestions/recommendations that need to be fulfilled by the institution. Due to the differences between VS and VN standards, these are framed slightly differently under different headings.

As the visitation reports are usually long documents, containing a lot of information, an executive summary with the visitors' commendations, recommendations and suggestions is given at the beginning of each VS visitation report in order to make it helpful to all parties. With VN visitation reports, areas of good practice, areas for improvement and actions required are listed.

All visitation reports list the experts involved in visiting the institutions along with their qualifications. According to the SAR, reports are edited by RCVS staff (without changing the content of the report) to achieve a consistent RCVS house style.

For both VS and VN, the RCVS reporting process includes a stage of factual checking by the university. Once the report has been finalised by the visiting team, it is forwarded to the institution for a factual check, and once this has been completed and any factual changes have been made, the report is taken to RCVS committees for consideration (see also ESG 2.2 and 2.3 in this report).

The Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee will take into account the findings of the visitors, the commendations /suggestions /recommendations, and the completed rubric before deciding whether the report should stand as it is written, or that there should be changes or additions to the report. According to the SAR, the latter could only occur if the sub-committee felt that there were inconsistencies between the findings of the visitation and the "suggestions" or "recommendations" presented. If the sub-committee felt that the visitors had made a suggestion on a fairly serious issue, it could be upgraded to a recommendation and, conversely, if a recommendation had been made to address a very minor matter, it could be changed to a suggestion. This serves also the consistency of treatment across programmes/universities.

The recommendations in the report are basis for the action plan and to some extent also for the annual monitoring reports of the universities.

During the interviews with university representatives and stakeholders we learned that although the reports are not widely read (especially by employers), all interviewees knew where to find them. The representatives of universities confirmed that the quality of reports had increased significantly over the years and that they find the reports useful.

Analysis

Based on SAR and studying the samples of VS and VN reports on RCVS's website and on site, the review panel came to the conclusion that the structure and content of accreditation reports reflect all elements described in ESG 2.6.

The reports include information about experts and their qualifications; evidence, analysis and findings; conclusions; features of good practice (commendations for VS, areas of good practice for VN); recommendations/suggestions (VS), and areas for improvement and actions required (VN).

The follow-up activities in the form of action plan after the accreditation, and to some extent also of annual monitoring reports, are based on the recommendations of the visiting team.

All reports contain an executive summary with commendations, recommendations and suggestions (VS) or areas of good practice, areas for improvement and actions (VN).

The reporting process includes a stage of factual checking by the university before the report is finalised.

Panel conclusion: Fully compliant

ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Evidence

Both, VS and VN accreditation processes, follow the same appeals procedure, described in the document "RCVS Visitation Appeal Procedure" (Annex 5 of SAR). This procedure has been introduced in 2017 as a result of the self-evaluation, in order to address the requirements of the ESG. As of SAR, up until 2017 any institution that wished to appeal an accreditation decision would have needed to make a case to the Privy Council. Whilst this meant that a mechanism existed, it constituted a very high hurdle, and, as such, might be seen as unfairly onerous. RCVS has, therefore, introduced an appeals procedure which it feels is proportionate, utilising members of the existing examinations appeals committee of the RCVS which comprises members of both professions and lay representatives.

According to the "RCVS Visitation Appeal Procedure", the Examination Appeals Committee will be appointed from time to time by or on behalf of the Council. It will include veterinary surgeons, registered veterinary nurses and lay persons. Two members of the committee will be designated by or on behalf of RCVS's Council as its chairman and vice-chairman.

The Examination Appeals Committee will act through panels when dealing with appeals. An appeals panel will consist of between three and five members of the Examination Appeals Committee chosen by the chairman of this committee and will include one person who is not a member of RCVS' Council.

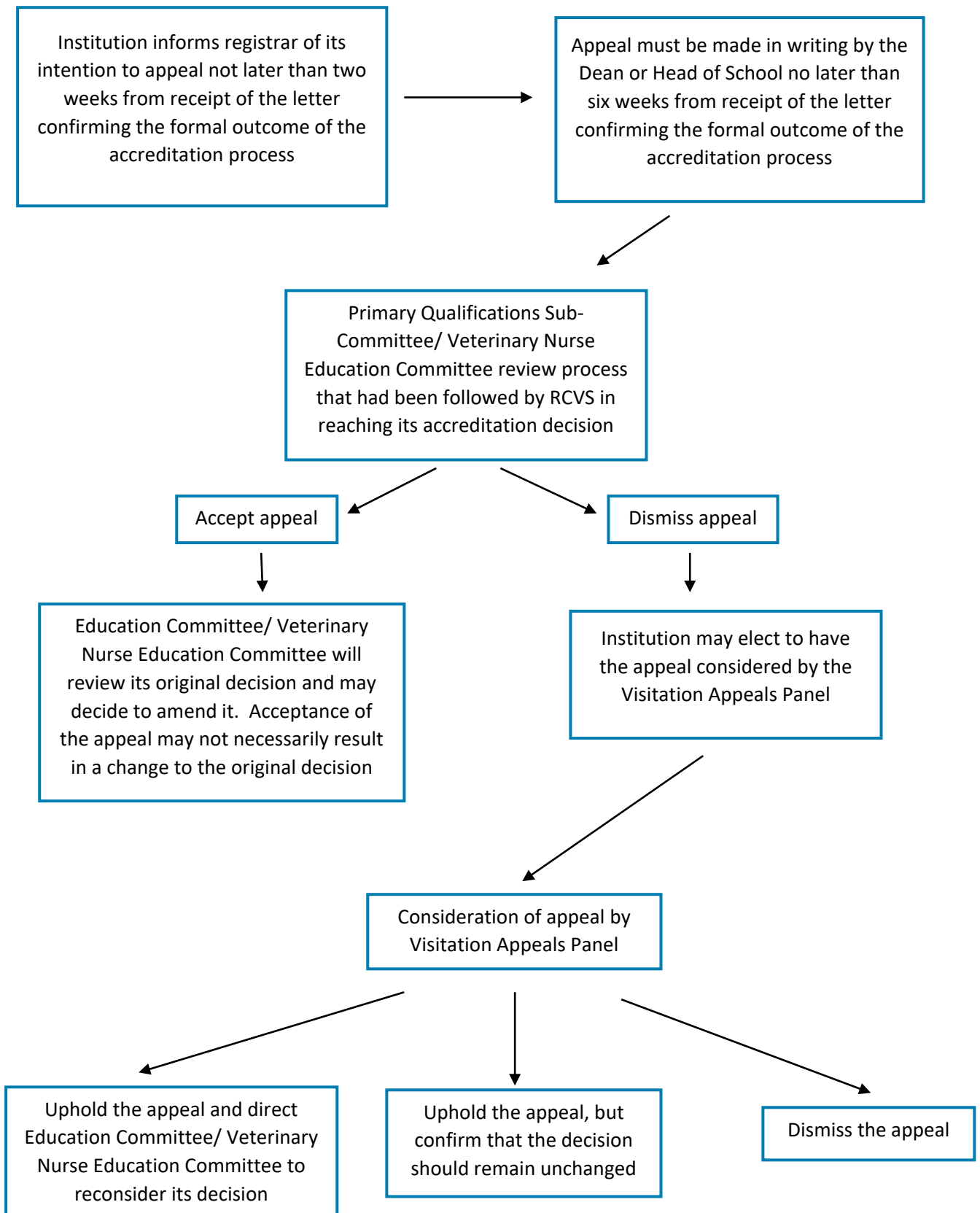
A school which is unhappy with the result of the process outlined above would still have recourse to the Privy Council, which now forms a final independent external appeal process.

A flowchart of the appeals process is given below.

Complaints can be received and dealt with at any stage of the process. They must be made in writing and will be dealt with in liaison with the Chairs of the relevant sub-committees or committees, whichever is appropriate depending on the nature of the complaint.

During the interview with the university representatives, they claimed and demonstrated that they were aware of the process and knew whom to address in case of dissatisfaction with the accreditation decision or process.

The review panel learned from the SAR and interviews that before a visitation takes place, the head of veterinary school or head of Veterinary Nursing centre being visited has the right to challenge the appointment of any member of the visiting team and ask RCVS to reconsider the appointment if they feel that any of the nominated visitors has a conflict of interest that cannot be managed during the visitation process.



Analysis

In 2017, the RCVS simplified the appeal process, thus made it more accessible and applicable to universities. Before the universities needed to address all appeals to the Privy Council which was time and resource consuming. The process is described in the document “RCVS Visitation Appeal Procedure” and published on RCVS’s website. In addition, there is a clearly defined system for dealing with complaints.

The university representatives are aware of where to find information about the appeals and complaints process and whom to address in case of dissatisfaction with the accreditation process or decision.

As the procedure has been only recently developed and very few institutions have been accredited since then, no examples of appeals were available at the time of the ENQA review. However, the review panel saw enough evidence to conclude that the College has developed a solid basis to meet this standard.

Panel conclusion: Fully compliant

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

ESG 2.2

The RCVS is commended for its well-structured and systematic follow-up process that allows institutions to demonstrate their improvements based on experts' recommendations between accreditations.

OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ESG 3.1 Substantially compliant

Panel recommendations:

- Add a more comprehensive QA policy to the next strategic plan or develop a separate QA policy document that would help stakeholders outside the RCVS to understand the aim and scope of its QA activities.
- Engage students from both veterinary surgeons and nurses programmes to the decision making bodies of the RCVS.

ESG 3.2 Fully compliant

ESG 3.3 Fully compliant

ESG 3.4 Partially compliant

Panel recommendations:

- Develop a clear concept and plan for thematic analysis.
- Set clear roles and responsibilities among staff members for analysing and publishing general findings of RCVS's external quality assurance activities.

ESG 3.5 Fully compliant

ESG 3.6 Substantially compliant

Panel recommendation:

- Apply a systematic approach for collecting feedback and align the procedures at accreditations of VS and VN degrees whenever possible.

ESG 3.7 Fully compliant

ESG 2.1 Substantially compliant

Panel recommendation: Develop VN accreditation methodology closer to the one of VS, and through this increase the focus on IQA in VN reviews, with especial attention to student-centred learning, also in VN reviews.

ESG 2.2 Fully compliant

ESG 2.3 Fully compliant

ESG 2.4 Substantially compliant

Panel recommendation:

- At VN accreditation, pursue the widening of review pools and avoid relying too heavily on the senior staff of RCVS.

ESG 2.5 Partially compliant

Accreditation decisions should be confinable and justifiable. Therefore, the review panel *recommends to*

- consider whether the complex system of decision-making could be simplified;
- make the option “Full accreditation for a shorter period” more precise.

ESG 2.6 Fully compliant

ESG 2.7 Fully compliant

In the light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, RCVS is in compliance with the ESG.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

ESG 3.6: As there is no one document describing the IQA policies and responsibilities, the RCVS is invited to consider developing a formal policy document. It is suggested that this documentation include formal procedures of IQA, articulation of responsibilities and formalised feedback structures to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose. This would allow for greater transparency and recording of formalised IQA systems.

ESG 2.3: As an area of good practice, expert panels of VN accreditation can see the university’s response and action plan, and comment on the reply if necessary. It is suggested that expert panels of VS accreditation are also provided the opportunity to view the university’s responses.

It is recognised that RCVS is not a typical QA agency but is a very experienced QA provider, although an inexperienced member of the European QA community. The review panel would encourage the RCVS to become more active participants of the relevant discourse and community activities.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

10 APR 2018		
TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
	Review panel's kick-off meeting and preparations for the visit A pre-visit meeting with the agency contact person to clarify elements related to the overall system and context (if requested)	
16.00 – 17.00	Meeting with the CEO and Presidential Team (President and Vice-Presidents of RCVS Council)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lizzie Lockett (CEO) • Stephan May (RCVS President) • Amanda Boag (Junior Vice-President) (Skype) • Kit Sturgess (RCVS Treasurer)
11 APR 2018		
8.30 – 9.00	Review panel's private meeting	
9.00 – 9.30	Meeting with the team responsible for preparation of the self-assessment report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lily Lipman (RVN Qualifications Manager) • Jordan Nicholls (Senior Education Officer) • Freda Andrews (Former RCVS Director of Education)
9.30 – 9.45	Review panel's private discussion	
9.45 – 10.30	Meeting with representatives of RCVS Council (except President and Vice-Presidents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynne Hill (RCVS Council) • Mandisa Greene (RCVS Council) • Andrea Jeffrey (RCVS Council) • David Argyle (RCVS Council)
10.30 – 10.45	Review panel's private discussion	
10.45 – 11.45	Meeting with representatives of Senior Staff (especially Registrar, Director of HR, Director of Veterinary Nursing, Director of Education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eleanor Ferguson (RCVS Registrar) • Kim Cleland (RCVS Director of HR) • Julie Dugmore (RCVS Director of Veterinary Nursing) • Chris Warman (RCVS Director of Education) • Corrie McCann (RCVS Director of Finance)
11.45 – 12.00	Review panel's private discussion	
12.00 – 13.00	Meeting with representatives of Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee and Education Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clare Tapsfield-Wright (Chair or PQSC) • Jo Oultram (PQSC)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malcolm Cobb (PQSC) • Susan Dawson (Chair of Education Committee) • Susan Paterson (Education Committee)
13.00 – 14.15	Lunch (panel only)	
14.15 – 15.00	Meeting with representatives of Veterinary Nurse Education Committee and Veterinary Nurses Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liz Cox (Chair of VNC) • Susan Howarth (VNEC) • Susan Proctor (VNC) • Hilary Orpet (VNC) • Liz Mossop (VNEC)
15.00 – 15.15	Review panel's private discussion	
15.15 – 16.15	Meeting with representatives of Audit and Risk Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liz Butler (External Chair of Audit & Risk Committee) • Victor Olowe (External member of ARC) • Janice Shardlow (External member of ARC)
16.15 – 18.00	Wrap-up meeting among panel members and preparations for day 3	
12 APR 2018		
8.30 – 9.00	Review panel private meeting	
9.00 – 9.45	Meeting with heads of some reviewed HEIs/HEI representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suzanne Edwards (Harper Adams University) • Nicola Ruedisueli (Head of VN School, Nottingham Trent University) • Gary England (Dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, University of Nottingham) • James Wood (Head of Department of Veterinary Medicine, University of Cambridge)
9.45 – 10.00	Review panel's private discussion	
10.00 – 10.45	Meeting with representatives from the reviewers' pool: incl. academic, employer and student representatives (ideally some from outside UK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannah Mason (VS Student representative) • Malcolm Bennett (RCVS VS Visitor) • Fred McKeating (RCVS VS Visitor) • Lauren Moore (VN Student representative) • Rachel Lumbis (RCVS VN Visitor)
10.45 – 11.00	Review panel's private discussion	
11.00 – 12.00	Meeting with stakeholder representatives, incl. relevant governmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aroon Korgaonkar (DEFRA)

	department, QAA, employers, students (AVS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Black (Paragon Veterinary Group – Employer) • Dave Charles (Association of Veterinary Students Senior Vice-President) • Maureen McLaughlin (QAA/PSRB Forum) • Racheal Marshall (Vets Now – Employer)
12.00 – 13.00	Meeting among panel members to agree on final issues to clarify	
13.00 – 14.15	Lunch (panel only)	
14.15 – 14.45	Meeting with CEO to clarify any pending issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lizzie Lockett (CEO) • Stephan May (RCVS President)
14.45 – 16.30	Private meeting among panel members to agree on the main findings	
16.30 – 17.00	Final de-briefing meeting with staff and Council/Board members of the agency to inform about preliminary findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lily Lipman (RVN Qualifications Manager) • Jordan Nicholls (Senior Education Officer) • Chris Warman (Director of Education) • Julie Dugmore (Director of Veterinary Nursing) • Lizzie Lockett (CEO) • Stephen May (RCVS President) • Liz Cox (Chair of VNC)

ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW

External review of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

October 2017

1. Background and Context

Setting and monitoring the standards for veterinary and veterinary nurse education is a key responsibility of the RCVS. The RCVS's authority and statutory obligation to accredit veterinary schools comes under the Primary national legislation, the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (item 1). The RCVS defines the competences that need to be met by the new graduate, and specifies the requirements for veterinary and veterinary nursing degree courses to be approved for registration purposes. For a veterinary degree or veterinary nursing degree to be approved for registration purposes by the College, the course must meet these published RCVS criteria.

The RCVS undertakes formal visitations to universities to ensure that veterinary and veterinary nursing degree standards are being maintained. For UK universities offering veterinary degrees, RCVS reports its recommendations to the Queen's Privy Council, which is a formal body of advisers to the Sovereign of the United Kingdom. For veterinary nursing degrees, RCVS reports its findings through the Veterinary Nurse Education Council and the Veterinary Nurse Council.

RCVS is applying for the first time for ENQA membership.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This review, will evaluate the way in which and to what extent RCVS fulfils the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether membership of RCVS should be granted.

The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting membership.

2.1 Activities of RCVS within the scope of the ESG

In order for RCVS to apply for ENQA membership and for registration in EQAR, this review will analyse all activities of RCVS that are within the scope of the ESG, i.e. reviews, audits, evaluations or accreditation of higher education institutions or programmes that relate to teaching and learning (and their relevant links to research and innovation). This is regardless of whether these activities are carried out within or outside the EHEA, and whether they are obligatory or voluntary.

The following activities of RCVS have to be addressed in the external review:

- Accreditation of veterinary degrees by RCVS
- Accreditation of veterinary nursing degrees by RCVS

3. The Review Process

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in line with the requirements of the *EQAR Procedures for Applications*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-assessment by RCVS including the preparation of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to RCVS;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the ENQA Review Committee;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency, including a voluntary follow-up visit.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of four members: one or two quality assurance experts, an academic employed by a higher education institution, student member, and eventually a labour market representative (if requested). One of the members will serve as the chair of the review panel, and another member as a review secretary. Two of the reviewers are nominated by the ENQA Board on the basis of proposals submitted to ENQA by the member national agencies. The third external reviewer is drawn from a nomination provided by the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). The nomination of the student member comes from the European Students' Union (ESU).

In addition to the four members, the panel will be supported by the ENQA Secretariat review coordinator who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA expectations are met throughout the process. The ENQA staff member will not be the Secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide RCVS with the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards RCVS review.

3.2 Self-assessment by RCVS, including the preparation of a self-assessment report

RCVS is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-assessment is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;

- The self-assessment report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a brief description of the national HE and QA system; background description of the current situation of the Agency; an analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a SWOT analysis; each criterion (ESG part II and III) addressed individually. All agency's QA activities (whether within their national jurisdiction or outside of it, and whether obligatory or voluntary) will be described and their compliance with the ESG analysed.
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which RCVS fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the ESG and thus the requirements of ENQA membership.
- The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat who has 4 weeks to pre-scrutinise it before forwarding the report to the panel of experts. The purpose of the pre-scrutiny is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The Secretariat will not judge the content of information itself but whether the necessary information, as stated in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, is present. For the second and subsequent reviews, the agency is expected to enlist the recommendations provided in the previous review and to outline actions taken to meet these recommendations. In case the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to reject the report and ask for a revised version within 4 weeks. In such cases, an additional fee of 1000 € will be charged to the agency.
- The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of six weeks prior to the site visit.

3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel

RCVS will draw up a draft proposal of the schedule for the site visit to be submitted to the review panel at least two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule includes an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is 2,5 days. The approved schedule shall be given to RCVS at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by RCVS in arriving in London (United Kingdom)

The site visit will close with an oral presentation of the major issues of the evaluation by review panel.

3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ESG. A draft will be first submitted to the ENQA review coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity and language and it will be then submitted to RCVS for comment on factual accuracy. If RCVS chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review panel will take into account the statement by RCVS, finalise the document and submit it to ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

When preparing the report, the review panel should also bear in mind the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG*, so as to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR.

RCVS is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation applying for membership and the ways in which RCVS expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be discussed along with the final evaluation report.

4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report

RCVS will consider the expert panel's report and will publish it on its website once the ENQA Board has made its decision. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. RCVS commits to preparing a follow-up plan in which it addresses the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting a follow-up report to the ENQA Board. The follow-up report will be published on the ENQA website, in addition to the full review report and the Board's decision.

The follow-up report will be complemented by a small-scale visit to the agency performed by two members of the original panel (whenever possible). This visit will be used to discuss issues, based on the ESG, considered as of particular importance or challenge by RCVS. Its purpose is entirely developmental and has no impact on the judgement of membership and/or compliance of the agency with the ESG. Should the agency not wish to take advantage of this opportunity, it may opt out by informing the ENQA Review Coordinator about this.

5. Use of the report

ENQA shall retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the expert panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, shall be vested in ENQA.

The review report is used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether RCVS has met the ESG and can be thus admitted as a member of ENQA. The report will also be used for registration on EQAR, and is designed so as to serve these two purposes. However, the review report is to be considered final only after being approved by the ENQA Board. Once submitted to RCVS and ENQA and until it is approved by the Board the report may not be used or relied upon by RCVS, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. RCVS may use the report at its discretion only after the Board has approved of the report. The approval of the report is independent of the decision on membership.

The Chair of the panel shall remain available to respond to questions of clarification or further information from the EQAR Register Committee provided that the ENQA Secretariat is copied in all such requests.

6. Budget

RCVS shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,500 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,500 EUR
Fee of the 2 other panel members	4,000 EUR (2,000 EUR each)
Fee of 2 panel members for follow-up visit	1,000 EUR (500 EUR each)
Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat	7,000 EUR
Experts Training fund	1,400 EUR
Approximate travel and subsistence expenses	6,000 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses follow-up visit	1,600 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000.00 EUR VAT excl. for a review team of 4 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, RCVS will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to RCVS if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget. The review fee will be paid by RCVS in three instalments – first one at the signature of the contract and the next two before the site visit.

The fee of the follow-up visit is included in the overall cost of the review and will not be reimbursed in case the agency does not wish to benefit from it.

In the event of a second site visit required by the Board and aiming at completing the assessment of compliance, and should the agency accept a second visit, an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert, as well as travel and subsistence costs are recoverable from the agency.

7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

Agreement on terms of reference	August 2017
Appointment of review panel members	August 2017
Self-assessment completed	By end December 2017
Pre-screening of SER by ENQA coordinator	January 2018
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	February 2018
Briefing of review panel members	March 2018
Review panel site visit	10-12 April 2018
Drafting of evaluation report and submitting it to ENQA coordinator for pre-screening	Early June 2018
Draft of evaluation report to RCVS	End June 2018
Statement of RCVS to review panel if necessary	Mid-July 2018
Submission of final report to ENQA	End July 2018
Consideration of the report by ENQA Board and response of RCVS	September 2018 (depending on the date of ENQA Board's meeting)
Publication of the report	October 2018 (depending on the date of ENQA Board's meeting and subject to report being approved)

ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY

ACOVENE	Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education
ARC	Audit and Risk Committee
AVBC	Australasian Veterinary Boards Council
AVMA	American Veterinary Medical Association
AVS	Association of Veterinary Students
EAEVE	European Association of Establishments of Veterinary Education
EC	Education Committee
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
HR	human resource
IAWG	International Accreditors Working Group
IQA	internal quality assurance
PQSC	Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee
QA	quality assurance
QAA	UK's Quality Assurance Agency
RCVS	Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
SAR	self-assessment report
SAVC	South African Veterinary Council
SDB	Strategic Development Budget
USDE	United States Department of Education
VN	veterinary nurses
VNC	Veterinary Nurses Council
VNEC	Veterinary Nurse Education Committee
VS	veterinary surgeons
VSA	Veterinary Surgeons Act
VSC	Veterinary Schools Council

ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY RCVS IN SAR AND ON SITE

Document	Chapter reference
QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education	Chapter 3
Subject Benchmark Statement Veterinary Science	Chapter 3
Subject Benchmark Statement Veterinary Nursing	Chapter 3
RCVS Day One Competences	Chapter 3
Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966	Chapter 4
Royal Charter of the RCVS	Chapter 4
Supplementary Royal Charter 2015	Chapter 4
Code of Professional Conduct – Veterinary Surgeons	Chapter 4
Code of Professional Conduct – Veterinary Nurses	Chapter 4
VN registration rules	Chapter 4
VN conduct and discipline rules	Chapter 4
AVMA recognition agreement	Chapter 8
SAVC recognition agreement	Chapter 8
AVBC recognition agreement	Chapter 8
IAWG agenda and minutes 2014 & 2016	Chapter 8
RCVS Strategic Plan	Chapter 9.1 ESG 3.1
RCVS standards and procedures for the accreditation of veterinary degrees	Chapter 9.1 ESG 3.1
RCVS awarding organisation and higher education institution handbook	Chapter 9.1 ESG 3.1
Vet Futures	Chapter 9.1 ESG 3.1
Vet Nurse Futures	Chapter 9.1 ESG 3.1
RCVS Facts 2015 & 2016	Chapter 9.4 ESG 3.4
RCVS Annual Report 2015 & 2016	Chapter 9.5 ESG 3.5
Visitor application person specification – Veterinary surgeon	Chapter 9.5 ESG 3.5
Visitor application person specification – Veterinary nurse	Chapter 9.5 ESG 3.5
RCVS Culture – The Way We Work	Chapter 9.6 ESG 3.6
SGU visit feedback 2016	Chapter 9.6 ESG 3.6
Surrey visit feedback 2017	Chapter 9.6 ESG 3.6
Surrey visit feedback 2018	Chapter 9.6 ESG 3.6
Cambridge visit feedback 2018	Chapter 9.6 ESG 3.6
US Department of Education review – report and outcome	Chapter 9.7 ESG 3.7
Veterinary Surgeon visitor training day presentation	Chapter 10.4 ESG 2.4
Veterinary Nurse visitor training day presentation	Chapter 10.4 ESG 2.4
Glasgow visit report 2013	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Bristol visit report 2014	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Cambridge visit report 2015	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Edinburgh visit report 2015	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Liverpool visit report 2016	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
SGU visit report 2016	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Surrey visit report 2017	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Anglia Ruskin visit report 2012	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
London visit report 2012	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Portsmouth visit report 2013	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
UWE visit report 2013	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Royal Agricultural University visit report 2013	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Brighton visit report 2015	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6

USWCG visit report 2015	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
University of Wales visit report 2015	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Nottingham Trent visit report 2015	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
UWE visit report 2016	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Harper Adams visit report 2016	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Bristol visit report 2017	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Coventry visit report 2017	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Oxford Brookes visit report 2017	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Plymouth visit report 2017	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
UCLan visit report 2017	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
EMS survey result 2014 & 2016	Chapter 11
Day One Competences Working Party minutes and survey results	Chapter 11
RCVS Council Minutes 2017-2018	Minutes
Audit & Risk Committee minutes 2017-2018	Minutes
Veterinary Nurses Council minutes 2013-2018	Minutes
Veterinary Nursing Education Committee minutes 2013-2018	Minutes
Education Committee minutes 2013-2018	Minutes
Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee minutes 2013-2018	Minutes
Terms of Reference for RCVS committees	Minutes
RCVS accreditation decisions 2013-2018	Minutes
RCVS News 2016 – 2017	Publications
VN Education news 2016 – 2017	Publications
Fitness to Practise guide for student VNs	Publications
RCVS Guide for Recent Graduates	Publications
PDP Guidance	Publications
Veterinary Surgeon & Veterinary Nurse careers leaflet	Publications
Mind Matters Guide	Publications
RCVS Visitation Appeal Procedure	ESG 2.7



THIS REPORT presents findings of the ENQA Agency Review of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), undertaken in 2018.



2018 ENQA AGENCY REVIEW

Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	4 February 2019
Title	Practice Standards Scheme update
Classification	Open session
Summary	Paper for note
Author	<p>Lisa Grannell/Lily Lipman</p> <p>Senior Manager, Practice Standards Scheme</p> <p>L.grannell@rcvs.org.uk</p> <p>I.lipman@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Update on the Practice Standards Scheme

1. Numbers

The Scheme is continuing to grow with 3,568 practice premises now part of the Scheme, representing 65% of all eligible practice premises. This is an increase from 3,449 practice premises in October 2018.

Small animal continues to represent the biggest category of species type with 2,639 premises followed by Mixed species premises, Farm animal and then Equine. Accreditation type remains highest under GP Small Animal followed by Core accreditation.

2. Awards and Events

At present, 295 Awards are held by 186 practices. The most frequently achieved awards are Client Service; Emergency and Critical Care; In-patient service and Team and Professional Responsibility. Advisory/Consultation Service is one category of Award where a practice recently successfully achieved this for the very first time since the launch of the Awards part of the Scheme.

A successful PSS Awards Ceremony was held at the London Vet Show on 15th November 2018 where accredited practices were recognised for their high quality veterinary care. The Awards were presented by the President of RCVS and the newly appointed Chair of PSG, Mandisa Greene was also in attendance. The next Awards ceremony will take place at BVNA Congress in October 2019.

The Scheme will be represented and promoted at SPVS/VMG Congress from 24th - 26 January in Celtic Manor Resort including a workshop being attended by three practices in the Scheme who will be talking about their experience of gaining Awards and providing examples of outstanding customer care.

3. Update from recent Practice Standards Group meetings

PSG met on 8th October 2018 and agreed plans put forward to include more Mental Health and Wellbeing guidance in the current Modules with further changes to the actual requirements to be added as part of the 2020 Review.

The Group also allowed the request from Ulster SPCA to join the Scheme as a charity, providing they agree to re-brand and remove the word hospital from their branding by the time of their next assessment in four years' time. A further condition was agreed by the Group that this change in title would need to be advertised by USPCA to clients also i.e. on their website and/or a poster in the premises themselves. USPCA agreed to these conditions.

The meeting of PSG held on 9th January 2019 was attended by representatives of the British College of Veterinary Specialists (BCVSp) to update the Group on their proposal for a

specialist strand for PSS under a Veterinary Specialist Hospital multidisciplinary. It was generally felt by members of the Group that the proposal from the BCVSp offered positive progress for the idea of including specialist practices in the Scheme and that this, along with evidence that feedback from previous PSG meetings had been adopted, should be supported and encouraged. It was suggested that the BCVSp should therefore be given the opportunity to continue building on the proposal.

It was decided by the Group that an update on the proposal from the BCVSp should be submitted to the Standards Committee at the meeting in April 2019, in order to get its views on the proposal.

It was also agreed that members of the Group would gather feedback from the senior level of their respective organisations to be included in the report that would be sent to the Standards Committee.

The January PSG meeting focussed heavily on the upcoming 2020 review. A review of the mandatory requirements and Award points in the Client service Module of the Scheme, incorporating the comments from the designated sub-group, was carried out by the Group. It was agreed that the Chair and Lead Assessor would form separate working groups to carry out the reviews of the remaining Modules, and each group would then present their comments and recommendations to the Group at the next meeting.

4. PSS assessor training programme

PSG, at their January 2019 meeting, were presented with a paper outlining the background and proposals for the development of a PSS assessor training programme. The paper submitted that the involvement of an external institution providing external validation could or would, add very little value over and above what training is already provided internally. The amount of value that may be added would also have to be balanced with reference to any costs that would be associated with such validation, bearing in mind 13 days of internal training per year already identified.

Taking into account the above points, the Group was asked if they were still in favour of an external qualification with Harper Adams or any other educational institute. The Group discussed what an externally verified course could add to the already comprehensive internal training programme. A consensus was reached that an internal training programme was the desired outcome at this time. It was agreed that this should be published on the PSS section of the RCVS website which would highlight the extensive training which assessors undertake, and promote the training as having been approved and endorsed by the College.

Some gaps in the current internal training programme were identified however such as around equality and diversity and conscious versus unconscious bias. The Group agreed that it would be desirable to add these training elements to the internal programme and that all current assessors should receive this training as soon as possible.

The Group agreed that the training internal training programme should be reviewed and updated as a live process, as often as required and in a transparent manner. The internal

training programme would need to be future proofed if assessor recruitment were to include Veterinary Nurses in the future. It will likely be necessary for the Group to revisit the question of an external qualification when the next round of recruitment for assessors is carried out but this is unlikely to be within the next two years.

5. New Senior Manager of the Scheme

Lily Lipman RVN has been appointed as the new permanent Senior Manager of the Scheme and will take over this role fully from 31st January.

MEETING	VN Council & Council
DATE	6 February 2019
TITLE	RVN PI Committee Chairperson's Report to Council
CLASSIFICATION	Unclassified
SUMMARY	This report sets out the work of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation (PI) Committee.
DECISIONS REQUIRED	None
ATTACHMENTS	None
AUTHORS	<p>Michael Hepper Barrister/Chief Investigator 020 7202 0755 m.hepper@rcvs.org.uk</p> <p>Velia Soames Head of Professional Conduct 020 7202 0740 v.soames@rcvs.org.uk</p>

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ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

REGISTERED VETERINARY NURSES PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT TO (VN) COUNCIL 6 February 2019

Introduction:

Since the last Report to Veterinary Nurses Council there have been three meetings of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee (16 October and 27 November 2018 and 15 January 2019). The next scheduled RVN PIC meeting is on 26 February 2019.

RVN Concerns received / registered:

Between 3 October 2018 and 18 January 2019 there were eight new Concerns received against RVNs. Of these eight new Concerns, three are currently under investigation by the Case Examiners Group (a veterinary and lay member on RVN PIC and a Case Manager). Three Concerns were closed by the Case Examiners Group as there was no arguable case and two Concerns are in the process of being assessed.

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee:

There were two new cases, raised before 3 October 2018 but considered by the RVN PIC on 15 January 2019. One of the new Concerns was fast tracked to RVN PI Committee because it involved the alleged theft of drugs by an RVN employee – the RVN PI Committee decided that there was a realistic prospect of serious professional misconduct against the named RVN and therefore referred this case to the RVN Disciplinary Committee for a public hearing. This case is still to be listed and shall be included in a future Report to VN Council. The second Concern involved an RVN carrying out a castration procedure on a cat and administering buprenorphine to a patient which had not been prescribed by a veterinary surgeon. The Committee decided that based on the information presented there was insufficient evidence to pass the realistic prospect threshold in regard to the RVN administering buprenorphine. However, in regard to the castration procedure the Committee decided there was a realistic prospect for serious professional misconduct, but took the view that it was not in the public interest to refer the

RVN's name to the RVN Disciplinary Committee for a public hearing as the RVN had shown insight, had admitted carrying out the procedure and given assurances that there would be no repetition. However, the Committee decided, in order to minimise the chances of any similar issues occurring in the future, to hold the case open for 2 years with formal advice to the RVN on Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966; registered veterinary nurses are not permitted to carry out cat castrations. If concerns of a similar nature are brought to light during the relevant held open period, the new Concern can be joined to the held open Concern and both Concerns may be referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.

Ongoing Investigations:

It was reported in previous reports to VN Council that one ongoing case was adjourned pending the outcome of an RVN's appeal against conviction by the criminal court. The criminal proceedings have very recently concluded as the RVN did not continue with her/his appeal and at its meeting on 15 January 2019, the RVN PIC Committee referred the RVN's name to the RVN Disciplinary Committee for a public hearing. This case is still to be listed and shall be included in a future Report to VN Council.

Health Concerns:

There are currently two RVNs being managed in context of the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Concerns:

There are currently no RVNs being managed in context of the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee:

Since the last report to VN Council, the RVN PI Committee has referred two cases to the RVN Disciplinary Committee. These cases are currently with the RVN Disciplinary Clerk and are in the process of being listed.

Training

The RVN PIC, PIC, Veterinary Investigators and members of the Professional Conduct team took part in two days of training in April and December 2018. Among the topics covered were refreshers on CEG/PIC roles and responsibilities, threshold tests (arguable case/realistic prospect), and relevant recent case law. Attendees also participated in case studies, and heard presentations on the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2013 and unconscious bias.

MDH/18/01/2019

Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	6 February 2019
Title	VN Register Report
Classification	Unclassified
Summary	<p>This paper provides the following statistics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The number of registered veterinary nurses as at 24 January 2019, showing removals in early January for non-payment of the annual fee. Figures for the previous five years are also included. b. New registrations for the calendar years 2013- 2018. The figures for 2016 - 2018 also show the qualification route of the new registrants. c. New student enrolments per academic year
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Author	<p>Annette Amato Deputy Head of Veterinary Nursing 020 7202 0713 a.amato@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Veterinary Nurses Register

a. Number of registered VNs

	22/01/2014	22/01/2015	20/01/2016	18/01/2017	18/01/2018	24/01/2019
Number of Registered Veterinary Nurses	10277	11381	13164	14337	15449	16864
Number of Listed Veterinary Nurses	1052	959	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of Nurses removed for non-payment of annual fee (annually – carried out in early January)	430 RVN 63 VN	302 RVN 60 VN	688 <i>(173 restored to register by 20/01/2016)</i>	247 <i>(17 restored to register by 18/01/2017)</i>	296 <i>(59 restored to register by 18/01/2018)</i>	450 <i>(124 restored to register by 24/01/2019)</i>

b. Number of admissions to the register (new registrants for the calendar year)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
UK Further Education qualification				719	945	1197
UK Higher Education qualification				400	401	406
Overseas qualification				90	89	78
Total new registrations	995	1054	1140	1209	1435	1681

c. Student enrolments for each academic year (from 1 July to 30 June)

Student Enrolments (academic year)	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
	1259	1488	1630	1797	1935	1990